



Download all your Fav Light Novels from [Just Light Novels](#)

Chapter 1: Reach

“Please give me a chance to save Yozora.”

I looked Hinata-san straight in the eye as I hardened my resolve.

At that moment, the words that Pegasus-san had told me came floating back into my head:

—— *Perhaps thinking stuff like ‘I want to protect her, to save her, to make her happy’ was foolish after all.*

.....Someone as great as Kashiwazaki Pegasus had said that it was foolish to try and save someone.

Then what will someone like me be able to do? I wondered. *I am the one who is aware of my weakness the most.*

Despite all that, I couldn’t just not say it.

Even if I wasn’t of any help whatsoever, I couldn’t not offer my hand to Mikadzuki Yozora.

The same way Shiguma Rika did to me on that day.

Or perhaps, the same way Sora did to Taka.

Hinata-san sent me a puzzled gaze.

“.....Save? Kodaka will save Yozora?”

“Yes.”

“Haha. I will gladly accept those feelings of yours, but nothing else.”

Hinata-san gave me an ironic smile and started to walk away, seeing which I said:

“I’m serious!”

“.....What the hell are you to Yozora?”

Frowning, Hinata-san asked me.

“I am Yozora’s...”

The words stuck in my mouth.

I don’t really know what I am to Yozora.

It’s because I don’t even know what she is to me.

1 / 7

“I am Yozora’s..... Perhaps I am nothing to her. For the time being that is.”

For the time being that is.

Or perhaps, *not yet*.

Yozora clearly told me that ‘we are no longer friends’.

But even Sora and Taka weren’t friends in the beginning.

When I was being bullied by some of my classmates in the park back then, Sora, a stranger with no relationship to me whatsoever, threw himself into the fray despite being all alone.

Everything began from that incident.

We are all strangers to one another in the beginning.

Thus——

“If you’re nothing to her, then stay out of it.”

Said Hinata-san, with a calm but overpowering tone.

It was the first time I’d heard this refreshing person speak in such a way. But even so...

“No way.”

“What?”

I gave my reply without a tinge of hesitation. Hinata-san was bewildered.

All people are unrelated to each other at the start.

But that is precisely why there is meaning in that hand which we extend to make that connection.

So you're saying that it's because I'm nothing to her, I'm not her friend and I'm unrelated to her?

“Just because I'm nothing to her doesn't mean I'll just stand by without doing anything.”

Moments of mutual glaring passed.

“.....You're quite the meddlesome guy, aren't you?”

2 / 7

Hinata-san made a face like she had given up, and then said in a distant, kind voice:

“—— I entrust her to you.”

Yes. I nodded.

It may be meddlesome, it may turn out to be just talk, it may just be kindness that's uncalled for, it may be irritating or even patronizing.

But.

When it comes to the feeling of wanting to make a bond, like hell I would lose.



I will save Yozora!

.....I clenched my teeth and thought that once again, but a clear idea of what I would do about it exactly hadn't come to mind.

To begin with, I didn't even know what Yozora would consider to be her salvation.

Even if I was sure of the fact that 'there is a problem', I still couldn't see what I was supposed to do in order to achieve the goal of making this problem clear.

The family circumstances of Mikadzuki Yozora, no matter how I thought about it, were too much for one high schooler to solve.

Yozora herself never asked for help by the way—— she had already given up.

Despite being in such a desperate situation, my heart was mysteriously free from any sense of hopelessness.

Unlike the Joseon dynasty which aggravated it's own isolation by transforming into a tiger, the question of what to do when I can't do anything by myself, is already answered now.

——*RUSTLE RUSTLE*

As I waited alone in the courtyard of the inn, she made her way over.

Shiguma Rika—— My one and only friend.

I called her a little while ago saying, "I have a problem I need to talk to you about."

That ultimate card known to man as 'having a friend listen to your problems' was now available to me.

Putting that aside though——

“H-Hello Kodaka- *san*. Shiguma Rika *here*.”

“Y-Yeah.”

Rika’s cheeks were strangely red, and she seemed pretty uncomfortable...

I didn’t understand it myself, but my face took on a somewhat forced expression as well.

It had been no more than half an hour since Rika and I had run into each other in the mixed outdoor bath.

When I saw just how far Rika had gone to torture herself over her body, I couldn’t help but fly into a rage and throw every rosy expression that came to mind in an attempt to relay that she was cute..... I was a little hesitant to use the expressions that Sena often uses, such as “kunka kunka” or “pero pero”.

Thus, Rika said something about wanting to ‘thank’ me and then showed me her—— *T-This is bad, my face is going red just thinking about it.*

“A-About what happened earlier..... it was just because I got overexcited you know! Now that Rika thinks about it, letting you touch my boobs was going too far, I’m reflecting on myself...”

“Y-Yeah, you’re right. Even if we’re friends, doing *that* was really going too far.”

“Yeah..... I-I’ll be careful from now on!”

“You bet! I’ll be careful too!”

Rika and I are friends.

Touching your friend’s boobs is wrong, right? Yeah...

“B-By the way, what is it? This thing you wanted to consult me about?”

As if trying to clear the strange mood, Rika changed the topic.

“Ah, right! The thing is..... it’s about Yozora.”

“About Yozora-senpai?”

“Yeah. How do I put this..... Yozora, she’s no good staying the way she is.”

It turned out a little ambiguous, but it seemed that Rika understood what I was getting at.

“.....Indeed, she may have returned to the Neighbors Club, but it definitely feels like she’s putting up a front, doesn’t it? Who knows when she’ll go on a trip again..... and it wouldn’t be weird if she really did leave next time.”

“Yeah...”

4 / 7

I nodded, and after hesitating over whether it would be alright to say it or not, I said:

“.....Yozora..... isn’t on good terms with her parents.”

“Uh-huh...”

“‘Uh-huh...’ you say?”

Getting a reaction that was surprisingly void of any emotion behind it bewildered me a little.

“.....Something like not getting along with one’s parents, that’s something that always happens at some point in life really.”

Rika replied coldly, as if spitting out the words.

The mood changed suddenly, and I found myself clenching my fists and glaring into Rika’s face.

This caused Rika to gasp, and she gave a small, wry smile.

“Ahh it’s not like that, it’s just that Rika doesn’t get on that well with her family, too.”

“.....Is that so?”

“W-Well, Rika’s family is of no importance now, is it?”

Rika closed the subject forcefully.

It was definitely not ‘of no importance’, but due to the necessity of prioritizing Yozora right now, I decided to let it go. For now.

“In any case, I’m against butting into her family issues without her asking us to.”

“I see.....”

As I hadn’t expected her to reject it over that, I kind of felt like the wind had been taken out of my sails.

“But you know, surely it wouldn’t be so bad if we did something like help her get along with her older sister?”

Hinata-san wanted to be on better terms with Yozora.

And my personal opinion, as an elder brother myself, is that it’s definitely better if siblings get along.

If, by chance, I was somehow rejected by Kobato in the same way that Yozora had rejected 5 / 7

Hinata-san, I have no doubt that it would bring me down hard.

Even during the time I had been away from the club, we continued to see each other everyday. During that time she had neither been angry at me nor blamed me, but instead got along with me as per usual.

Now that I think about, I can’t overstate how much that saved me.

For Yozora as well, having a family that cares for her will definitely aid

her, if nothing else. I want to believe that.

I thought such things as I examined Rika's reaction.

".....? Yozora-senpai..... has an older sister?"

Rika said, surprised.

"Yeah, you haven't heard about it from Hinata-san?"

Since Rika and Hinata-san were sharing a room, I was under the impression that she had already told her.

"I haven't really talked much with that person..... wait, you don't mean?!"

"Yep."

I explained to Rika that Yozora and Hinata-san are in fact sisters. Seeing that neither Yozora nor Hinata-san were particularly hiding this fact, I assumed telling her wouldn't be an issue.

".....I see..... so they're what they call 'pretty sisters', I believe?
.....Tsk—"

Rika clicked her tongue slightly. It seemed her complex over her outward appearance hadn't gone away yet..... *even though she's this cute.*

".....Well, if Hinata-senpai wants to be on better terms with Yozora-senpai, then I think it would be okay if we were to lend a hand."

"True that."

I nodded at Rika's acceptance.

".....Okay, so our first objective is decided for now."

"Wouldn't letting them do something together be the standard thing to do in such a case.....? For example playing a game or making a movie together."

"There is no assurance that doing those things would bring them

closer..... is what a person with such experience would say.”

Rika smiled bitterly.

6 / 7

It's probably because she found out that Yukimura doesn't see her as a friend.

“If there was a sure way to make people get along better, no one would have to worry because of his relationships with others..... For the time being let's try going with the plan of having them play together.”

“Y-Yeah, you're right.” I nodded, “.....In that case, it would be best to do it within the timeframe of this trip. Having the two of them play together alone all of a sudden would be impossible, so I believe we should start with a joint game between the student council and the Neighbors Club. That way Yozora will probably agree to participate.”

“I-Indeed...”

For some reason Rika did not seem very enthusiastic.

“Is there something wrong?”

“.....No, it's just that the student council's idea of 'bonding' is a little too strong. Especially Hidaka-senpai..... I understand that she may be a good-natured person, but..... she was way too open from the outset..... The so-called 'nude socializing' that they forced on us was terrible too, Yozora-senpai had that person do detestable things to her without her consent..... Rika would never do something like going into a bath together with someone unless they were a person she could trust and she didn't have a bad feeling about them but _____”

Rika blushed slightly.

Similarly, I could feel that my own face had begun to heat up.

“.....W-Well, Rika endured it for Yozora-senpai.”

Rika tried to cover-up her slip of the tongue by quickly adding that.

“I-I see. After an incident like that..... what do we do now?”

It seemed that the path I had chosen required bringing the student council and the Neighbors Club together: all eleven of us.

Though I had no idea how I could be the playmaker for eleven people without some kind of tool.

Translator notes and references

[\[1\]](#) A Korean kingdom that lasted about 500 years from 1392-1897.
More info [here](#)

[\[2\]](#) Very perverted way to describe sniffing and licking.
Onomatopoeia.

Chapter 2: Who's the liar?

Anyway, since our bodies had cooled down a bit, Rika and I decided to head back inside for the time being.

On the matter of what should be done about Yozora's situation, we still hadn't come up with good idea.

We went upstairs, arriving in the corridor of the second floor where our rooms were.

In the corridor, we came across a strange object that was wriggling left and right.

“Uwa.....?!”

“W-What is that.....?”

As we approached timidly, we noticed that it was a rolled, tied up futon.

This object's wriggling movement looked as if it was an earthworm or a snake; it was a bit revolting.

“Umm..... Shouldn't we help whoever is inside?” said Rika.

“Y-Yeah! Let's do that!”

We loosened the strings binding the futon in a hurry (they were the ones used for this hotel's yukatas) and unrolled the futon.

What we find inside was none other than Jinguuji Karin in her yukata.

“Haa..... It's been a while since I last tasted the fear of death.”

Karin let out a grim statement, but wore a strange expression of ecstasy.

“What were you even doing in there.....?”

“I was told by Yozora onee-sama to “Go to bed first.” So after I got into the futon, I suddenly found myself being tied up. Yozora onee-

sama is bold too, isn't she?"

.....Now that I think about it, Yozora said something like "That pervert. When I get back to my room I'll make sure to tie her up and roll her all over." It looks like she did indeed put those words into practice.

"In any case, it's helpful that you're here. We were thinking of deepening the bond between the Neighbors Club and the student council or something like that, though in reality we simply want to play games together. Could you pass the message on to the student council about it?

1 / 36

After hearing my proposition, Karin raised her eyebrow a bit and stared intently into my eyes, all the while putting on a poker face.

"W-What?"

"It's nothing, I just found it a little unexpected. I didn't think Hasegawa-kun was the type to suggest such a thing on his accord."

I was quite surprised that Karin had paid any attention to me.

It's true that in the time when I ran away from the club to the student council, I only fulfilled the roles given to me, and never tried to move forward on my own accord; I kept a distance between myself and everybody in the student council.

"I-It's what they call a change of heart."

"'Change of heart?' Such a convenient phrase."

The corners of Karin's mouth lifted up a bit.

".....In most cases being a little forceful is much better than being distant, but be careful not to get too drunk on this 'doing something about it myself' thing."

Indifferent, Karin pinpointed the place where it stung and struck hard.

"In any case, I agree to deepening the friendship with your club..... In Yozora onee-sama's case, it seems that attacking head on has the opposite effect too; I was just thinking of burying the outer moats of the castle instead so it's perfect."

“Oi.”

I had really started to get anxious about going ahead with this idea, even though we haven’t even started yet.

“So, what kind of game are we going to play, I wonder?”

“Well..... We’re still grappling with that problem. We haven’t made any preparations either..... Does a game that’s fit for 10 people indoors come to mind?”

“Yes, I can think of one actually.”

“You can?!”

I just took a long shot when I asked her, but I got an immediate result.

Looking strangely elated, the corners of Karin’s mouth opened again.

“Heh..... I guess there’s no need to hide it. The person who stands before you is none other than the president of the Bodge Club.”

“The Homoge Club?!”

2 / 36

Rika, who up until this point had practically been hiding behind my back, suddenly screamed with joy.

Karin responded by sending the excited Rika a suspicious look.

“Homoge.....? I don’t really understand, but it sounds horrid.....”

It’s true that to Karin who’s into yuri that may not be very agreeable to it, but..... you can tell just by how it sounds?

“Not the homoge club but the Bodge Club. Board Game Club.”

“Ah, so things like *The Friend-Making Game DX*?”

Hearing my comment, Karin raised her eyebrow again.

“Indeed..... W-Why is it that when you heard board games you thought of that one first? If one were to speak about common games the first thing that comes to mind would usually be something like

Mahjong or Life or Monopoly, I'd say. Could it be that you have a taste for board games, Hasegawa-kun?"

Karin's voice got unusually lively.

I understood how she felt. I, too, get a little excited whenever I see someone reading a light novel on the train after all. Rika (BL fetish) and Yukimura (Japanese history maniac) are somewhat like that too.

.....But it's exactly because I understood her that I felt apologetic when I responded.

"No, it just so happened that I tried it recently; I'm not very well informed. The only other game I've played is Life after all."

"I see....."

Noticing her vague disappointment, I continued,

"In any case, you're the president of the Bodge Club, so you're well versed with board games, right?"

"To be precise, my taste encompasses not only board games, but also table talk and RPGs, electronic board games and card games."

It seems she is particular even about the names of the different genres, but that doesn't matter right now.

"So, do you have one with you today?"

"At the moment, the only thing I have on me are playing cards."

"Playing cards, eh.....?"

"I see you're making a face that had it's expectations betrayed. It's better that you don't 3 / 36

underestimate playing cards, however. Not only are there games that you can play with 10

people using them, but they are also very valuable items that can supplement many other games."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. I will be teaching you an extremely interesting game for this

event. There are only five members in the Bodge Club, so we rarely get a chance to play *that* game..... fufu.”

The wicked glint in Karin’s eyes was something that I failed to notice at the time.



And thus we proceeded to gather everybody from the student council and the Neighbors Club.

The chosen place was Yozora, Karin and Kobato’s room, number 207. I guess if you put 10

people in there it was bound to feel a little cramped.

When we told everyone about the plan to hold a game party, Hinata-san, Akane-san, Aoi, Yukimura, Sena and Maria gave us their OK. But as for Kobato and Yozora, seeing that their room was chosen as the gathering place, they only reluctantly declared their participation.

With Karin sitting in the leader’s seat, we sat around the table.

When Hinata-san chose her seat, Yozora immediately sat in the seat farthest away from her.

The seating is as follows →

4 / 36

“So, what are we playing exactly?”

Student council vice-president, Ootomo Akane, asked Karin with a refreshing smile. As I hadn’t heard about that either, I turned my attention to Karin.

After she waited for the gazes of everybody in the room to gather on her, Karin spoke:

“The game I shall introducing to everybody today is—— Werewolf.”

“Werewolf?” repeated Akane-san.

“Werewolf..... In other words, a wolf-man.”

“I know the wolf-man! He’s the scary guy!”

Maria said, while waving her hands excitedly.

“This game is known to be quite *popular* abroad, as it’s frequently played by families and is also considered to be a standard party game.”

“Ohh?” “Hmm.” Such sounds indicated that some of us were impressed.

“The fundamental rules are quite simple—— The players are split into the villager team and the werewolf team, and each player aims to bring victory to their own team, naturally.”

Karin continued her explanation indifferently.

“The stage is a fictional small village—— Let’s call it Chronica village for the sake of convenience. The villagers were leading peaceful lives. One day however, a cruelly mutilated corpse is found near the village. The body was in such a horrifying condition, that the villagers were unable to identify whose body it was.”

The story was a bit creepy, but perhaps due the the way Karin talks, it didn’t sound scary at all.

“.....But mysteriously, it was soon very clear that no one amongst the villagers had actually died. The villagers then decided to investigate the matter further, and it appeared that a werewolf had killed one of the villagers, and then assumed the shape of that person.”

“Gyaa—! This is bad! We need to kill that werewolf!”

My face distorted from Maria’s dangerous outcry, but Karin continued her story.

“That’s very true, Youjo-sensei. Before any more victims fall victim to it, the werewolf

must be found and killed. The villagers and werewolves, which of these two groups will survive this tragedy——?”

That’s one bloody setting you have there..... Is this game really geared towards family play?

Karin then began to explain the rules in detail. To sum it up: One person takes the role of the moderator and has the duty of moving the game through its different stages. Being the only person with experience, Karin will be in charge of that role.

The ten players were then divided into a villager team and werewolf team as per the rules.

The villager team had 8 players, while the werewolf team had 2. The werewolf team wins by reducing the number of villagers to the number of werewolves. The villager team's job is to kill all the werewolves before that happens.

The players on the werewolf team get the chance to check each other's identity before the game starts, a chance naturally not given to the villager team players; they can only be sure that they themselves aren't werewolves.

Amongst the villagers, there exists the special role of a 'diviner' (Apparently a whole array of other special roles exist as well, but seeing that this is our first time we are sticking with the most basic 'diviner' role.)

The game is split into three phases; namely the noon phase, the voting phase and the night phase.

During the noon phase the players take 5 minutes to hold a discussion, during which they put out their opinion on who's suspicious.

The end of the noon phase marks the beginning of the voting phase, and individually, everyone writes the name of the person they find the most suspicious - in other words, they vote. One anonymous vote per person, and the rules state that it's forbidden to vote for yourself. The moderator then counts the votes, and the person with most votes is executed on the spot. The executed player is then removed from the game, and loses the right to speak for the rest of it. In addition, in the case where two or more players have equally the most votes, an execution will not be held that day. If a villager is executed, and the number of villagers and werewolves becomes the same, the victory goes to the werewolves.

When the voting phase ends, comes the night phase. During this phase, all players still alive rest their heads on the table and ‘sleep’. Then the diviner alone raises his or her head and tries to ‘divine’ the true nature of someone by pointing towards them, silently asking the moderator about their identity. This ‘divination’ by the diviner means that he or she has the ability to differentiate werewolf from villager. The moderator then reveals to the diviner the identity of the player they pointed to.

After the diviner, the werewolf team finally gets their turn. Communicating through things such as eye signals and gestures, they decide which human they will eat (kill) for the night.

6 / 36

As the werewolf team’s turn comes to an end, the morning comes, and the moderator then announces the name of the player who was the victim of the past night, who then has to retire for the rest of the game. If at that moment the villagers and werewolves have the same number, the moderator would announce the werewolf team’s victory. In the event that no victims were announced, it would mean the werewolves have been taken out, thus signaling the victory of the villager team.

Even if a player is executed or otherwise eaten, that player’s identity is not revealed.....

That means that even if you execute a human by mistake you won’t be able to tell right away.

The players on both teams use ten cards in total: the two jokers for the werewolves, the queen for the diviner and normal number cards for the villagers.

“This is a game with many local rules and variations so it’s not unusual for there to be many different rules regarding the ‘werewolves’. However, there is something that remains true no matter how much the rules differ, and that is the fact that this game is a ‘team fight’. It is important to act not for one’s own survival, but for one’s team to survive.”

T-Team fight, is it.....? That may be where the Neighbors Club members fail the most.

“Especially the diviner, as they have a very powerful ability which practically holds the key to the victory for the villager team, one would thus expect that he or she would be a very high priority target should their identity be uncovered.”

“.....Fumu..... So it all depends on the point at which the diviner is revealed.”

Said Yozora, with a serious face.

“Precisely. As expected from Yozora once-sama.”

“.....Naturally, a werewolf can lie and pretend to be a diviner as well.”

“Yes. The ‘false diviner’ is a convenient method of defense for the werewolf team. The important part is how the werewolves squirms around in order to not be detected.”

“All right..... I think I’ve got it for the most part.”

A small smile found it’s way to Yozora’s face.

Although she had been in a bad mood in the beginning, hearing the actual overview of the game seemed to have caught her interest at some point. Basically, Yozora gets serious when playing games, and she seems to be quite fond of such “role playing” games too.

I was relieved that at the very least, the choice of playing a game together wasn’t the wrong one, and I exchanged winks with Rika who was sitting beside me.

“So, shall we begin?”

7 / 36

Karin started handing out the cards face down, and each player checked their own, whilst making sure no one else saw it.

Mine was a role with no abilities whatsoever; a villager.

Situations like “the narrator did it”, or “I knew it all along” had no place here as my card was nothing but the five of spades. It was a bit of a shame.

“Does everybody understand what their role is?”

Everybody nodded to moderator Karin's question.

“Now I will do a test to see who the werewolves and the diviner are, but before that I’d like for everybody to tap the table with their fingers while covering their faces, so as to prevent any sounds from reaching them. Just like this.”

Karin then started tapping away at the table using one of her fingernails.

I see. It's true that when everything calms down and the person besides you moves, even if your head is hidden you'd be able to hear them.

“So everyone, I’d like you now to close your eyes and hide your faces in your arms.”

As ordered, we all closed our eyes and hid our faces, and then started tapping the table.

“Members of the werewolf team, please raise your heads to check each other’s identity.”

As I was a member of the villager team, I had no way of finding out who raised their heads.

I could only hear the strange tapping sounds. *I wonder if, at this moment, the two fearsome werewolves were laughing as they looked each other in the face.*

A few seconds later—

“Werewolves, please hide your heads now..... The diviner may now raise their head.”

I earnestly continued to tap my fingers on the table. After a few more seconds—

“Diviner, please hide your head now..... All players, please raise your heads and open your eyes.”

Everyone lifted their head and looked around at everyone else. *I wonder who the werewolves are.....?*

“As you are all aware..... last night, two corpses were found in our peaceful Chronica village. It seems that two werewolves have infiltrated the village, and have taken the identities of two of our villagers.”

Everybody, including myself, were sneaking careful peeks at one another.

“When night falls the werewolves reveal their horrendous form. However, once the day breaks they return to the shape of a normal human, and their power is also no different from one. In order to prevent any more slaughter, there is no choice but to execute the 8
/ 36

werewolves during the day. After a 5 minute discussion, please vote on the person you think should be executed.”

Karin set the timer on her smartphone to 5 minutes.

“——Well everyone, let the discussion begin.”

And thus the battle of existence between the werewolves and villagers had begun.



[The First Day]

“You’d better come clean and confess, Yozora! You’re the werewolf, aren’t you!”

The first one to light the barrel was none other than Sena.

“Ha? On what basis are you making these accusations, stupid Meat?”

“My instincts, of course! You are sort of like a werewolf after all!”

.....To this unreasonable accusation, Yozora shot a venomous glare back at Sena.

“I see..... So how about you, then. How can we be sure you aren’t a werewolf yourself?”

“Exactly what about me is suspicious?”

“Everything. Your personality, your usual behaviour and even your gazes; it all screams of a hungry beast inside.”

Un Un! Kobato, who was sitting next to Yozora, nodded passionately in agreement.

“K-Kobato-chan too!?”

Sena wailed with teary eyes.

“Excuse me, everyone, I think the poop vampire is the werewolf!”

Maria cut in, raising her hand vigorously.

“Wha.....!? W-What makes you say that, you nun!?”

“It’s ‘cause you always call yourself a vampire and vampires are scary, and werewolves are scary guys too, so therefore you must be one!”

9 / 36

“Kukuku..... I am a noble of the king of darkness, Leysis Vi Felicity Sumeragi! A great vampire of true ancestry! Werewolves are merely inferior demonic beasts, you dare not think they are in the same league as one such as myself!”

“Hmpf! You’re a poop wolf for sure!”

“Ugugu..... It is you who plays the part of the innocent clergywoman despite being a mere poopy wolf!”

“Come now, take it down a notch you two..... you two have no proof for letting those sparks fly either.”

I said to Maria and Kobato, who seemed like they would go at it again at any moment, as well as to Yozora and Sena who continued glaring at each other.

“You’re shady yourself, Kodaka. That glare of yours looks exactly like a wolf’s,” said Sena.

“They say all men are wolves after all.”

10 / 36



11 / 36

Akane-san added, riding the wave.

“I-I’m a villager!”

“.....Kodaka’s just a loser who also happens to have a scary face.”

Yozora mumbled.

“Ah..... Now that you mention it, that’s true.”

Sena replied with a truly convinced and sympathetic face, after that Yukimura weighed in as well,

“.....If Aniki was a wolf, how relieving that would have been.....”

“You’re clearly saying things left and right that have nothing to do with the game!”

Even though the doubts concerning my identity have been cleared immediately, I don’t feel glad at all.....

“If we were to go by appearances, then Aoi’s wolf cut is an easy hint.”

With the utterance of those words from Hinata-san, everybody’s

attention turned to Aoi.

“M-Me?! I-I am a mere human! To begin with, Hinata-san, please don’t treat someone like a wolf just because of their looks! Fugugu!”

The sight of Aoi howling while showing her fang immediately brought the image of a kid wolf to mind..... *Are we really sure she isn’t one?*

“Hmm..... It’s because we don’t have any reliable hints in the current situation. How about doing it like this—”

Akane-san cut herself off, and then continued.

“Karin, in the case where the votes are equal, no one gets executed, right?”

“Correct.”

“Great. Then for the first day only, I’d like to ask everyone to vote for the person on their right.”

“Indeed! If we do that, every person would receive one vote and we can pass the day without anyone being executed!” said Aoi.

“Hmmm..... I still think we should take our chances and kill Yozora though.....”

Akane-san smiled wryly at the dissatisfied Sena.

12 / 36

“That would be fully okay if you got the wolf by a stroke of good luck, but the chance of killing a normal villager instead is quite high after all.”

“.....It’s possible that the werewolf would act differently, so shouldn’t we contemplate the cases where the name of the person on the right is not written as well?” said Yozora, and in the very next moment she went, “Ah!” which was followed by an expression that clearly showed she had realised something.

“I see now, in that case the person to the left of the person who didn’t receive any votes would be a werewolf...”

“Precisely. In addition to that, the werewolves cannot coordinate with each other during the voting phase, so the chance that two

individuals get two votes - thereby nullifying them - is quite high. We would reveal the identity of both werewolves without anyone being killed——

That is why you should withhold from doing anything stupid; isn't that right, Mr Wolf?"

Akane-san directed her speech to the werewolves who were supposedly here, as if mocking them.

And right there, the alarm on Karin's smartphone went off.

"Time's up. Please wrap up the discussion, as we will be voting momentarily."

Upon hearing those words from the moderator Karin, the talking came to a halt.

"Everybody, please write the name of the one person you think should be executed on a piece of paper and hand it to me. In addition, please write your name in the corner of the paper, it will naturally remain anonymous."

I wrote my name on the blank scraps of paper handed to us before the game began with a ballpoint pen.

As the person to my right was Yukimura, I wrote in the middle of the paper 'Yukimura' and then wrote 'Kodaka' in the corner, and then I handed the paper to Karin.

I was reassured by the fact that even though I wrote her name, she wouldn't be executed.

"I shall now begin counting the votes."

After gathering all the ballots, and shuffling them so it isn't apparent which paper belongs to which person, Karin opened the first one.

"Yusa Aoi."

Hearing her name called, Aoi flinched. *Even though there's no need to get flustered.*

Continuing, Karin opened the second one.

"Hasegawa Kodaka."

“Ofu!”

13 / 36

I take it all back..... Even if you know you won't be executed, it's still bad for the heart.

Karin continued opening the ballots and reading out the names.

“Mikadzuki Yozora..... Takayama Maria..... Hidaka Hinata..... Shiguma Rika..... Ootomo Akane.”

Good good. A vote for each person, it's all going according to plan.

.....However,

“Takayama Maria.”

“Heh...? Hahiiiiiii?!” cried the baffled Maria.

“Wha...?!” “Huh?!” “Eeeh?!” The chaos spread to the other players as well.

I couldn't immediately understand why everybody was so shaken.

“.....Kusonoki Yukimura..... Hasegawa Kobato..... That is all.”

While listening to Karin's indifferent tone reading out the votes, I was finally able to understand what had happened.

Maria's. Name. Was. Called. Twice.

“As a result of this vote, it has been decided that Takayama Maria-san will be executed.”

“A-Am I going to be killed.....? Why?! Why, why?!”

Karin continued talking over the perplexed Maria in a cruel and indifferent voice.

“The execution shall take place immediately. Youjo-sensei is seized and taken to the gallows in the town square.”

“Gyaa—!! I don't wanna—!”

Maria cried and shouted.

Regardless, all we could do was watch the distraught Maria.

“.....A rope is put around Youjo-sensei’s neck. *Guru guru guru—*.
Gyuuu—. *Kui—*.

Gyuuuuuu—!”

While mixing in some sound effects, Karin reproduced the supposed execution.

The indifferent voice we had been listening to the entire time had started to sound more gratified as well.

14 / 36

“Even after she had been thrown off the gallows, Youjo-sensei squirmed for a bit, but eventually she stopped moving. Amen.”

“Gyaaaaaa————!!”

“You have already died. Please speak no further.”

“Yes ma’am.....(´ω`)”

3

Karin crossed herself once again with an “Amen”, while Maria hung her head, crestfallen.

“The vote and execution went on without an incident, and night fell on Chronica village. All those still alive please close your eyes and cover your faces as if you were sleeping..... Ah, please don’t forget to tap as well.”

Without even being given time to process what just happened, we all obeyed the words of our moderator, Karin, and started tapping the table with our heads down.

“It is now nighttime. I ask the diviner to please raise their head..... Please point your finger at the person you wish to investigate.”

If I recall correctly, the diviner was able to differentiate between werewolves and villagers.

We’re counting on you, diviner..... Please unveil the werewolves!

“.....Would the diviner please lower their head..... Werewolves,

please raise your heads.....

Now, please select the human you'd like to eat tonight."

For several tens of seconds, all I could hear was the constant tapping on the table.

Two werewolves (or I guess just one if Maria was indeed one of them) were now choosing their prey and feasting on it.

As for me, I just prayed the night would end quickly while I continued tapping away.

"Werewolves, please lower your heads."

[The Second Day]

"The night has ended. Everyone, please raise your heads and open your eyes."

I opened my eyes and checked everybody's faces.

They look nervous indeed. I guess it makes sense if you think that just moments ago one of them was eaten by a werewolf.

"This morning, the head of Hidaka Hinata-san was found in the town well."

"W-What?"

15 / 36

Hearing that she'd become a victim herself, Hinata-san was unsettled.

"Hinata-san's head was torn off in such a horrifying manner, some of the muscle fibers were still hanging out. Her eyeballs had been gouged out and, in her now caved-in eye sockets, only deep red ____"

"W-Wait a moment, Karin! Is such a graphic detailed description even necessary?!"

"Please do not showcase your guro fetishes at such a time!"

Akane-san and Aoi hurriedly stopped Karin's story.

"M-My..... h-head..... uu....."

Seemingly bad at dealing with such graphic topics, Hinata-san kept checking her head.

"Thus, Hinata-san has been eliminated from the game and will remain silent."

"Heh..... You had it coming."

Yozora whispered in a voice Hinata-san couldn't hear, which was regardless heard quite clearly by Kobato and Rika, who were sitting next to her and flinched as a result.

But really..... 'You had it coming', eh? It's hardly any different from a werewolf declaring 'I killed Hinata-san'. If Yozora was indeed a werewolf, it would make sense that she would take out Hinata-san from the start.

Is Yozora one of the werewolves.....?

"Now then, please commence your discussions for the second day."

The moderator set the timer to 5 minutes, upon which we started talking.

"I..... hold the belief that Yozora-anego is a werewolf."

"Why do you think that, Yukki?" asked Aoi.

"Because I heard her whisper 'You had it coming' upon the death of Hinata-dono."

It looks like Yukimura had heard her as well.

"It's just your imagination."

Said Yozora dismissively. However—

"I'm sorry, but Rika heard it as well."

".....Me too."

Rika and I declared. Kobato did not say it explicitly, but she looked at us with a conflicted expression.

Seeing that she won't be able to cover it up with so many witnesses, Yozora clicked her tongue, "Tch....."

".....I did indeed have a grudge with the dead woman."

The deceased Hinata-san kept staring seriously into Yozora's face in silence.

"Huh? A grudge?"

".....10 years ago..... my younger brother was killed by that woman!"

"Bu!"

In response to Yozora's outrageous statement: Rika, Yukimura, Akane-san and myself, spat out at the same time.

"Haha! You really did have it coming! Being killed by a werewolf is surely nothing other than divine retribution!"

"B-Brother?! But we don't have a b——"

"I ask the corpses to remain silent, please."

"Uuu....."

Karin gave a curt reminder to the confused Hinata-san.

".....Oh well, perhaps such roleplay moves aren't too bad after all; when they are of use."

Said Akane-san, smiling wryly.

"Leaving the statements of Mikadzuki-san aside for now, there is something I'm more interested in at the moment."

"Ah! It's the case of Takayama Maria-sensei's death on the first day, isn't it?!" said Aoi.

Akane-san nodded.

That is indeed really important. The reason why Maria was executed yesterday.

Akane-san then spoke again, putting on a difficult expression.

"After the last discussion, everyone should have voted for their neighbor on their right. It's appropriate to consider that the werewolf would defy that agreement and try to mischievously diminish the number of villagers. And as such, the player to the left of the person with no votes should be the werewolf, but....."

Sena had been the one to receive no votes on the first day.

However, the person left from her had gotten two votes and was hence executed - Maria herself.

17 / 36

"Could Maria have written her own name?"

I asked, and Karin answered,

"The vote did without a doubt conform with the rules."

"I see....."

Only the moderator knew who had voted for whom. Going by that, there had been no mistake.

"If that's the case..... then what happened.....?"

Akane-san pondered.

"Since we don't know the truth behind Maria-sensei's murder, the most suspicious person would of course be....."

"Hah?!"

"HII—!"

Aoi looked in Yozora's direction, but immediately shrunk back like a scorned puppy from the glare she received. From the one incident, when she tried to destroy the Neighbors Club, Aoi had become very well aware that Yozora was a handful.

However, I quite frankly agree that Yozora was the most suspicious one at the moment. If we voted now, the person who'd be hung would probably be.....

"She certainly is suspicious, but it's old news that Yozora-senpai

utters disturbing things and I'm a bit reluctant to arbitrarily decide that she's the culprit from just that....."

The one coming to her defense was Rika.

"Kukuku..... I doth concur....." Kobato approved.

"So why don't we do the same as before and vote for the person to the right of us and see what happens?"

"But, if we keep doing it like that, we will grant the werewolves time," Yukimura said, indicating her disapproval.

"It's just as dangerous to randomly execute someone in a vote, right? If done cleverly, the diviner will probably detect the werewolf tomorrow night."

"Certainly, if we take into account the risk of executing the diviner by mistake, I agree with Rika....."

"I understand..... If Aniki says so....."

Yukimura yielded.

18 / 36

"Hmm..... Well, I guess that's okay?" said Sena.

With the other players showing no signs of opposition either, discussion time expired and the voting phase started.

"Well then, everyone, write the name of the person you think should be executed in the middle and your own name in the corner and hand it to me."

As decided, I casted my vote for Yukimura as I did before.

Now then..... what will it be?

"Okay, the vote is done... Yusa Aoi... Hasegawa Kodaka... Mikadzuki Yozora... Kusunoki Yukimura... Ootomo Akane... Kashiwazaki Sena... Shiguma Rika... Hasegawa Kobato..."

Ooh!

".....Everyone has received one vote, so no one will be executed this time round."

Towards the somewhat regretfully spoken words of Karin, a commotion stirred among the players.

"The voting time is over and the second night has fallen on Chronica village. Everyone among the living players, please cast your heads down."

We all put our heads down and - without needing to be instructed by Karin - we began drumming on the table.

"Well then..... Diviner, raise your head..... Please point at the person to divine..... That person is..... Please cast your head down, diviner."

I beg you, diviner..... We can only rely on you now, diviner.....!

".....Please raise your heads, werewolves..... Choose the one you'll eat tonight."

While my heart was throbbing, I continued drumming on the table. And.....

".....Please cast your heads down, werewolves....."

[The Third Day]

".....The night is over. Players, you may raise your heads."

Fuu——..... I spontaneously leaked a sigh.

Maybe the others noticed.

".....Quite regretfully, you discover the lower half of Shiguma Rika's body fastened to the 19 / 36

town church's cross with her clothes torn apart."

"WHY AM I MURDERED SO BRUTALLY?!"

Rika the victim shouted.

".....Shiguma-san's corpse is tied to the cross with her own intestines. Furthermore, around her genitals were countless bits of fur——"

"Enough already!"

whack

"Oww~"

Karin, who described the murder very lively and bizarrely, was struck on the head by Hidaka-san.

".....The dead are asked to not operate anymore."

Karin sulked.

".....In any case, last night's victim was Shiguma-san. May her soul rest in peace, Amen.

Now, everybody, begin today's discussion."

Following on from Karin's instruction, we begun the discussion.

"Why Rika..... Kuu.....!"

A anguished cry escaped my mouth.

Although it was all just a game, it was fairly vexing nonetheless...

"It's a pity....." Yukimura said.

"A lot happened, but..... now that she's gone, it feels kind of lonely, doesn't it....."

Yozora said with a docile face as if it had happened in reality. Beside her, Rika was making a sullen face.

"H-Hey. I don't know..... who the diviner is, but..... have you worked out who the werewolves are?" I implored.

However, no one came forward.

"Looks like no one came forward, huh....." said Aoi. "Have they still not found a werewolf, or....."

"Or have they already died.....?"

Maybe Maria, who had been executed in the beginning; or Hinata-san, who had been killed by the werewolf; or Rika.

It was quite possible that one of those three had been the diviner.

".....The diviner should have investigated at least two people. For example, even if they can't specify who the wolves are, just by knowing whether someone is human or not, they'll have plenty of hints."

Akane-san said, and the surviving members looked around.

"Certainly, even if there's two people they can trust, it would be reassuring," Yukimura added.

"True, huh....." I agreed. *If there were two..... no, including the diviner, three people who were different from the villagers among the seven of us, it'd become easy to narrow down the werewolves.*

"Isn't there also the possibility that the people investigated were killed by the wolves?" Aoi asked.

"That certainly is possible——"

—*Too*, but I was interrupted.

"——No; we know at least two people who are definitely human."

Yozora declared.

"Eh?"

Yozora added to her bewildering statement,

"——I'm the diviner."

We gulped upon that confession.

"D-Do you have proof?!" asked Aoi.

".....It's a pity, but I still haven't found the last werewolf. The two I've divined were human."

"W-Who did you divine?"

I asked, timidly.

"Kodaka and you."

Yozora pointed at Aoi.

"M-Me? T-True, I really am a villager—!"

21 / 36

Aoi's face brightened up cheerfully.

"I am too! Then Yozora really is the diviner——"

"Fu....."

Akane-san let out a small snicker, but it seemed she intentionally made it loud enough to be heard.

".....Akane-san?"

"——So you're the werewolf after all, aren't you, Mikadzuki Yozora?"

Gazing at Yozora's face in front of her, Akane-san said that with a carrying voice.

"Wha.....!"

Yozora's face expressed agitation.

"W-W-W-W-What's the meaning of this?!"

Akane-san smiled at the utterly confused Aoi.

"If you wanna know how I know, it's because I'm the real diviner."

""EEEEEH?!""

Aoi and I raised our shocked voices in harmony.

"It's highly likely that she created an atmosphere where it would seem safe for the diviner to come forth, and when no one did, the werewolf concluded that 'The diviner must be dead'

and swindled that she herself was the real diviner. I dared to remain silent without announcing myself. But, sure enough, the fake diviner made her entry. You were too hasty, weren't you, Mr. Wolf?"

"Yozora..... a false diviner.....?"

"Y-You're the werewolf after all?! You lied again!"

Sena pressed Yozora.

"So Yozora-anego's 'You had it coming' was....." said Yukimura.

"B-But Akane-san! Mikadzuki-san guessed right that I'm a villager!"

Even I understood that Aoi's point was off.

"Aoi. The werewolf side knows from the start who's a villager and who's a werewolf. Even if 22 / 36

she guesses villagers right, it doesn't amount to any proof that she is the real diviner, you know?"

"N-Now that you mention it, that's true!"

Aoi's eyes widened in the face of Akane-san's explanation.

"Hmph..... I can't put much faith into people who wait until the enemy makes their move and then announces they're the diviner. Or does Senpai have some proof that she's the real deal?"

Yozora's words were reasonable, too.

While everyone observed her, Akane-san expressed a bold smile.

"Of course. I've already found the other werewolf, and now I have you."

"WHA...!" Yozora was at a loss.

"If the diviner was discovered, they would most certainly become the werewolves' next target. That's why after discovering the second werewolf—— after you, the false diviner, revealed yourself —— I am able to come forward like this."

"W-Who else do you believe is a werewolf?!" inquired Aoi.

The rest of us held our breath too and watched Akane-san.

"Idiot! Don't listen to this fake diviner's lies!"

Ignoring Yozora's imploring, Akane-san continued her case.

"Initially, I divined Kashiwazaki Sena on the first day. It's rude, but Kashiwazaki-san's behavior on day one was pretty suspicious, right? She was divined first. However, she is a villager."

".....! I certainly am human..... Then you might be the real diviner?"

"Wait! You're being deceived, stupid Meat! She said herself that it's not proof knowing who's human and who's not!"

Akane-san expressed a composed smile to the ruffled Yozora.

"That's right, huh? So the real show starts here. On the second day I divined....."

Akane-san shifted her gaze and *bishi* thrustured her finger at.....

"Hasegawa Kobato-chan. You are a werewolf."

"Kobato?!" "Kobato-chan?!"

"Ku—..... Kukuku..... Y-You've seen through my natural shape splendidly, human..... Wait, EEH?! T-Tha's not! I-I'm a vampire!"

23 / 36

Kobato-chan became flustered and caused a commotion.

As she was at her wits' end, and the au naturel Kobato mixed in with the Leysis role-playing couldn't give a clear answer to the crucial question about whether she was a werewolf or not.

"So Kobato-chan and Yozora are the werewolves.....?"

Sena said sorrowfully. Yozora replied with a strong voice,

"Like I said, you're being deceived, stupid Meat! You guys, don't be deceived too!"

".....Akane-san, why did you divine Kobato on day two?"

When I asked that—

"I had doubts whether Mikadzuki-san was a werewolf. But Kobato-chan had the notable characteristic as if she was cooperating with Mikadzuki-san. It seemed like Mikadzuki-san would make a move if she saw the chance, so I decided to divine the obedient Kobato-chan

first—— Bingo."

"Now I understand....."

I had the feeling that she was strong with logic. Figures that she'd also see through something like Kobato's cooperation from her behavior in the short-term.

".....Ootomo-senpai, was it? You're surprisingly good with words, huh....."

To Yozora, who turned towards her with piercing eyes, Akane-san shrugged lightly.

"Haha, even though I'm the student council vice-president, huh?"

"I'd say you're *too good* with your words. If I were the werewolf, I'd definitely judge you as the most troublesome fiend and kill you off first. Yet, you're still alive—— This fact alone is more than enough proof that you're the werewolf!"

.....True, if I was the werewolf, I'd probably judge the conversationally clever and intelligent Akane-san as the most dangerous too.

"Fu..... I'd say right back at you. If I was the werewolf, I'd kill you first."

With a refreshing smile, Akane-san said something disturbing.

"Everyone, I think we should execute Mikadzuki-san first. I'll probably be killed during the night, but hang Kobato-chan next and it's the villager team's win!"

"D-Don't listen to her! She's trying to set me——"

And then the chime rang signalling that time was up.

".....The discussion has ended. We'll move onto the voting stage now. Please write down the name of the person you think should be executed."

24 / 36

"Ku....."

Yozora or Akane-san..... Which one of them was lying.....?"

Yozora's evidence was that she said she had divined me, but considering that Yozora could be the werewolf, there was no credibility to that evidence.

On the other hand, there was Akane-san; one could think that there was more credible when she said she found a werewolf, but I'm not convinced that she isn't a werewolf herself.

Personally, rather than believing Yozora, who hadn't been able to wipe away the suspicious feeling about her, Akane-san, with her sure-shot behavior and sound speech, was easier to believe, but..... was that really all?

To begin with, why did Yozora use evidence that was completely devoid of credibility? Had she been lured out by the mood to let the diviner make their appearance as Akane-san had claimed? It was the first time that we'd played this game, so it wouldn't be a surprise to do something careless.....

The more I thought about it, the less I knew.

".....Please hasten your vote."

As I couldn't decide on a name, the moderator urged me on.

Mikadzuki Yozora or Ootomo Akane?

In the end, I—— unable to choose either of them, wrote down Hasegawa Kobato for the time being and submitted it.

Someone's life..... nay, the fate of the entire village, was hanging on my vote..... I couldn't allow that kind of decision to be decided by my intuition alone.

This was another case where - before I was swept by the tide to make a choice - I wanted to think about it as hard as I could, to ensure I made the best decision I could—— Even though it was just a game.

"Well then, let's move on to the tally."

Everyone had cast their votes and Karin read out the names.

".....Ootomo Akane..... Mikadzuki Yozora..... Mikadzuki Yozora..... Ootomo Akane.....

Mikadzuki Yozora..... Ootomo Akane....."

The vote was split..... three-to-three.

The suspected Yozora and Kobato had voted for Akane-san and Akane-san had voted for Yozora, that much was certain, who might the others have voted for?

25 / 36

And everyone with the exception of me - who knew the result - held their breath waiting for the last vote.

".....Hasegawa Kobato."

"ME—?!"

Kobato shouted upon this unexpected result. Everyone else was just as dumbfounded.

".....That's a bit..... unexpected, isn't it....."

Akane-san leaked, hoarsely.

I had the feeling that it was the first time that I'd seen Akane-san that unnerved.

[The Fourth Day]

After the voting phase was over, the established night phase commenced.

I continued to earnestly tap on the table as usual and when morning came—— the game approached an unexpected development.

".....Outside the village there are ancient ruins; in there, Mikadzuki Yozora onee-sama's corpse was found locked away in a crystal. While still preserving the beautiful figure of her lifetime, her face was so peaceful that it made others wonder whether she was just asleep.

By the way, she's completely naked." *slurp*

"It seems like the description of this corpse is way different from the ones before..... Also, don't lick your lips."

After instinctively tsukkomi'ing Karin with scornful eyes, I looked in the direction of the victim, Yozora.

With an appearance that suggested she had known this would happen, Yozora wasn't phased one bit.

".....You were the one who was hasty."

Expressing a faint smile, Yozora mumbled in a whisper.

"Well then, commence the discussion."

As soon as Karin announced that: me, Sena, Aoi, Yukimura, and Kobato all looked at Akane-san.

"What's wrong, everyone? Do I have something on my head? For example..... wolf ears?"

Akane-san no longer tried to hide the fact that she was a werewolf.

26 / 36

The werewolf team had managed to execute the true diviner, Yozora, by using a fraud diviner strategy and then committed Yozora's murder during the night phase.

Akane-san would no doubt be executed tonight, however, it seems she was content with that as a price for taking out Yozora.

Both Yozora and Akane-san calmly threw away their lives for a chance at victory. I felt a chill contemplating such a steel-hearted playstyle.

"There are now five left..... Who is the other werewolf.....?"

Aoi, Sena, Yukimura and Kobato..... all looked around suspiciously.

"For the time being, we're sure that Hasegawa Kobato-san isn't one, right?! She was chosen by Akane-san to be executed after all!"

"I wonder about that, Aoi. Perhaps I mixed in the truth as part of my plan to make you believe me??"

"I've been telling you over and over that I'm no werewolf! I am a great vampire of true ancestry, Leysis Vi Felicity Sumeragi!"

“Yes, yes, there isn’t a single wolf left in this village. To tell you the truth, Takayama Maria-sensei who we executed at the beginning was the other werewolf. Oh dear, I’ve really lost now. By the way, Hasegawa-kun, how does going into the mixed bath with me wearing only a bikini sound?”

“Wha……!”

Even if I knew it was a joke, I couldn’t help but go red.

“Th-This isn’t the time to be falling for her tactics to buy time!”

“I see, then I will declare the shocking truth right here and now! I’m not really a werewolf!

You need to believe me!”

“……Alright, now that we can safely eliminate Akane-san during the execution today, let us start discussing who the other werewolf is.”

“Y-Yes!” “I understand.” “U-Un.”

Aoi, Yukimura and Kobato nodded. Then—

“The other one is Yukimura.”

Declared Sena, suddenly.

“Eh?!”

27 / 36

Everyone, including Akane-san, was surprised.

“Sena-anego…… what evidence do you have for saying such things……”

It was the same calm tone Yukimura always used, but I felt a slight hesitation in it.

Carelessly, Sena continued,

“Evidence? *Because I divined it earlier*, of course.”

“D-Divined it……?”

“Indeed. I am the true diviner.”

“Hahaha..... What a funny story, Kashiwazaki-san. The real diviner was Mikadzuki-san, who was killed last night.”

Said Akane-san with a cool voice, but her expression was a bit stiff.

“It’s not ‘Who was killed’ it’s ‘Whom I killed’, right?In any case, spare us the hassle and confess, Yukimura.”

“I am an innocent person.”

“Haaa..... No other choice then,” Sena sighed, and started explaining.

“On the first night I divined Yozora, and she turned out to be a villager.”

“.....Now that I think about it, after all the rambling you did on the first day about how Yozora was the werewolf, you were strangely silent on the second. Even though Yozora started looking suspicious on the second day.”

“There you have it. I was the only one who knew Yozora wasn’t a werewolf.”

Sena nodded to my words and went on further.

“I divined Rika the next day, but since she was executed right after that it was pretty much meaningless. And on the third day Yozora went on saying she was the diviner, right? I knew she could only be thinking of a petty trick so I decided to stay quiet and see how it goes.

And then two diviners appeared at once so I could only think ‘Ah, this one must be the werewolf then.’ It boiled down to me pretending to go head to head with Yozora to make you lower your guard.”

“Ku.....”

A look of resentment came to Akane-san’s face.

“Then, the ones who voted for Akane-san yesterday were Yozora and Sena and.....”

“M-Me!” said Kobato, raising her hand.

“I voted for Mikadzuki-san that time.....” Aoi confessed honestly.

28 / 36

Akane-san’s speech had been very persuasive so it couldn’t be helped.

“I had voted for Akane-dono. She was the werewolf in the end indeed.”

“That one is really hard to swallow, Yukki.....!”

Aoi tsukkomi'd Yukimura, who had tried to feign her innocence.

“.....By the way, the one who voted for Kobato was me; I couldn’t decide.”

“.....It would have all gone smoothly if everybody came to my side..... you indecisive.....”

Akane-san hurled those words at me, along with a death stare.

The fact that she couldn’t execute Yozora must have been a flaw in Akane-san’s calculation.

Yukimura was on the same team and thus a sure vote, and she was under the impression that Yozora and Sena were still antagonists.

Her calculation had been that if she convinced someone out of the remaining villagers - Aoi, Kobato, or myself - she'd win. But so that the diviner fraud would work out, one person had to be framed as the werewolf. That she had chosen Kobato was probably a calculated risk, as she would have an easier time earning the trust of Aoi and me, whom she was acquainted with.

Yozora was apparently the diviner, and even if she hadn’t been, she was the greatest force to be reckoned with; the werewolf side had no choice but sacrifice one of it’s own to take her down.

But in reality, the assumption that Yozora was the diviner had been wrong.....

And then, the alarm rang.

“.....Please end the discussion now. We will now be entering the voting phase——”

[The Fifth Day]

With the vote, Akane-san was executed. After that, it was something like a throwaway match.

The fourth evening phase ended, morning came, and Karin commenced her usual -

pointlessly cruel - corpse finding.

".....In the butcher's organic waste bin, a meat pie made using pieces of Kashiwazaki Sena was found. So that her fingertips, nipples, etc., that had been chopped into small pieces remained fresh——"

"Why am I leftovers when Yozora gets a crystal?! Redo it!"

29 / 36

Sustaining Sena's complaints, Karin corrected herself reluctantly.

".....Inside an ancient ruin below the village, Kashiwazaki Sena's beautiful nipples were discovered, encased in crystal."

"Hm..... Well, that's fine."

Fine.....? I don't understand your criteria.

And then we reached discussion time.

The person who appeared to be the last werewolf, who had sealed Sena's beautiful nipples inside a crystal, pleaded expressionlessly.

".....I'm innocent. It's the werewolf's plan."

You're bad at telling lies, aren't you..... Yukimura. Normally her simple-minded frankness was her virtue, but in this game it was nothing but a weakness.

Without anyone believing Yukimura's words, the discussion concluded quickly and we moved on to the voting stage.

"While Kusunoki-san - who had changed into her burial clothes - was on her way to the gallows, she vigorously slices her stomach open, plunges her hand into the wound, rips out her own guts, and throws them all over the spectators."

".....may God strike you down, Hashiba Hideyoshi." [3]

After quoting Oda Nobutaka's parting words, Yukimura hung her head. Maybe because seppuku was something samurais did gladly, she was in surprisingly high spirits.

The night fell in Chronica village—— and then morning came.

"Morning has come. All of the remaining players, please raise your heads."

After everyone had raised their head, Karin announced indifferently
—

"There wasn't a single victim last night. It appears that not a single werewolf remains in Chronica village. Congratulations. The villager team has won."

The three survivors: Aoi, Kobato and myself, all let out big sighs of relief.

"I-It's over....."

Without even feeling the joy of victory, all we could do was heave sighs of relief because we had managed to survive, and this bloodthirsty, intrigue-filled game was finally over.

30 / 36

☺

"AH~~~~~! SO VEXING!

SO~~~~~VE~~~~~XING~~~~~

The second the game had ended, the usually cool Akane-san threw herself on the ground, face-up, and lamented like a child.

"How regretful....."

Yukimura, having been on the same werewolf team, also expressed a sour look full of frustration.

That they were feeling really bitter over having lost showed that

they'd taken the game seriously.

"Hehe, thanks to the great me, it has turned into an overwhelming victory, right! Be grateful, you ignorants!"

"What nonsense are you spouting now, moronic Meat."

Yozora showered the boasting Sena with a cold voice.

"W-What's with you, it's a fact that we won thanks to me, isn't it?"

".....Your first vote went for me, right?"

"Ug.....?!"

Bullseye; Sena's face grew stiff.

"If you had killed me off there, we would've been the ones to lose."

"Th-That's not true. I was the diviner and my divine powers are unparalleled."

"Well said for someone who missed two days in a row....."

"I divined in dislike order, so that couldn't be helped!"

First Yozora, then Rika, then Yukimura.....

"What couldn't be helped there?! Use your head and reasoning a bit, idiot!"

"Huh?! W-Wait a sec!"

Akane-san rose in a flustered manner.

".....Could it be that you know what happened during the first vote?"

31 / 36

Everyone should've followed the promise to vote for the person to the right of them, but Sena hadn't gotten one, while Maria got two and was executed.

I had also realized the real situation in the middle of the game. Perhaps everyone in the Neighbors Club had.

"Sena voted Yozora, and Maria and Kobato voted for each other....."

right?"

I confirmed with Karin the moderator.

"That's how it is."

Karin nodded.

As the result, Hinata-san, sitting to the left of Maria, and Kobato's vote added up to two, and Maria had died.

Knowing the truth, Akane-san was dumbfounded.

"W-Why are you guys doing such a meaningless.....?"

"I thought she was the werewolf!"

"Kukuku..... This poop saint showed the rudeness to doubt the noble me, so I ought to bestow divine punishment onto her to teach her a lesson....."

"When wondering who's a werewolf and who's not, getting rid of Yozora first would be the best thing to do. And so I—— OUCH—!"

Maria, Kobato, and Sena all explained their reasoning, and Yozora hit Sena across the face with a slipper.

".....We were saved because Sumeragi didn't vote for me."

"Kukuku..... Fuhihi....."

As Yozora caressed Kobato's head, Kobato went happily bashful. Seeing Kobato hugging Yozora earnestly, Sena got frustrated and made a "Gununu....." sound.

Akane-san sighed with a stunned expression in front of the Neighbors Club.

".....It's probably something a sore loser would say, but..... if that irregular thing hadn't occurred and turned everything upside down, I would've been able to conduct myself more perfectly..... Now I can't help but reflect thinking 'Ahh, I should have said it that way' or

'Ohh, I should have phrased it like that', it's so frustrating.....!"

Assuming that, the victory had been related to the behavior of those

three people in the end, huh?

Yozora pretending to be the diviner, as well as turning herself into the murderer in the beginning, and then suddenly becoming obedient from day two onwards was because she was confident that Sena was the diviner.

32 / 36

As expected, Akane-san hadn't been able to read the difficult relationships in the Neighbors Club and whether we would work as a team or not. Especially that the diviner is suddenly pushing a murder on someone without any basis etc, if one thinks about it normally, it's improbable.

".....E-Excuse me....."

Yozora addressed Akane-san with a tense expression.

"Hm?"

".....T-There's something I don't understand. Why did the werewolves kill..... errr.....

umm..... *that* the first night?"

Yozora casted a glance into Hinata's direction. *'That', huh.....*

Speaking of which, during the game, Hinata-san hadn't stood out at all. And yet, the reason why she had been eliminated first..... Did Akane-san dislike Hinata in reality too?

"It's not like there's no reason, but..... Haha, you'll know soon enough, I guess."

Akane-san laughed and avoided answering.

Yozora wasn't satisfied and asked again.

"Then why did you kill Rika on day two?"

"Kusunoki-san chose the one to eat on day two, you know?"

"Yukimura?"

When I shifted my gaze, Yukimura mumbled expressionlessly,
".....She's more dangerous....."

"Dangerous? What do you mean?"

".....Did you really not realize?"

".....?"

Yukimura said something incomprehensible, so I could do nothing more than tilt my head in puzzlement.

Akane-san continued her speech.

"Well, to tell the truth, I agreed to eat Shiguma-san next, so it was decided smoothly. The two who seemed most dangerous were you and Shiguma-san, but you had that verbal slip when Hina died, so I thought it'd be easy to lay the blame you when the discussion came."

".....So you thought like that after all....."

Akane-san's face suddenly went grim from Yozora's words.

33 / 36

"After all.....?! Could that 'You had it coming' been a tactic to make me believe I could frame and kill you during the day, thus protecting you from being eaten at night.....?!"

"You're reading too much into it. My real thoughts just slipped out."

Yozora smiled wryly..... As for me, I wanted it to be tactics. It weighed on my mind and so I peeked into Hinata-san's direction; she seemed downhearted.

"If that's the case, then the 'pretending to be the diviner'-act on day three also 'just slipped out'?"

"No, that was..... If I hadn't made a move then, I thought that the retarded real diviner would've introduced herself....."

"Now I understand, you covered for Kashiwazaki-san."

".....I had no other choice to win."

"And here I thought 'It's my win!' right there....."

".....I did, too. When Senpai announced herself as the second diviner, I thought 'Got you', but..... I didn't think that you'd drive

me into a corner with your speech like that. We would've been the ones to lose if Kodaka hadn't been so indecisive."

"Fufu..... probably. I believe I would've won him over if it had been someone other than you."

Yozora and Akane-san smiled daringly. After their high-level battle had unfolded, they seemed to have mutually accepted one another. It was like a shounen manga.

This plan's foremost goal had been to deepen the relationship between Yozora and Hinata-san, but this wasn't a bad result at all in its own way. It could become the foothold to get Yozora to become friends with Hinata-san, and Akane-san herself was also an extremely good person.

.....Even though my careful actions had been related to our victory, it wasn't very satisfying to be called indecisive.



Our brains and mental strength had been drained, so after a short exchange of the impressions, we broke up.

Greatly entwined with intelligence, perception, acting, communication, and even real human relationships - it had been an amazing game..... It was interesting, but it made me dislike the adult world a bit.

34 / 36

"My bad, Karin. You relied on me, but in the end I left it all to you."

After everyone had left for room 207, I bowed my head to Karin.

From game selection, over rules explanation, to moderation, just about everything had been left to Karin and I couldn't do anything.

".....Apologizing is unnecessary here. I had fun playing a game with so many."

"I-Is that so..... Ehm..... Thanks."

"Yep. You're welcome."

Karin smiled gently..... *So she could make this expression too, huh.*

Grateful from the bottom of my heart, I was about to leave for my room, when—

".....Kodaka."

From inside the room, Yozora called out to me and I turned my head.

Yozora seemed to be scowling as she gazed at me.

".....So, it was your idea after all that we got together for a game, right?"

".....Was it none of my business?"

"Of course."

Yozora flung those cold words.

"I see....."

Although such a reply had been more than expected, it was still a pity.

I turned on my heels and left for my room.

Behind me, though—

".....It's none of your business..... but..... it's not like I wasn't happy....."

It was such a quiet voice that I wondered if I was hearing things, but nevertheless, I couldn't help but smile broadly.

Translator notes and references

35 / 36

[1] Little girl - it sounds cuter this way :D

[2] Guro, short for grotesque. Look up ero guro if you really want, but be warned - NSFW or the soul.

[3]“Mukui o Mateya Hashiba Chikuzen”, the second half of his vengeful poetry. More info

[here](#).

Chapter 3: Daybreak

The following day.

After having breakfast, we left the inn at around 8 o'clock. The plan was to head straight back to the academy without stopping anywhere on the way.

It was a busy schedule, but putting the always-free-on-holidays Neighbors Club aside, Pegasus (who was driving the minibus) and all of the student council members were busy people, so there was no choice.

The seating arrangement this time was quite different from the trip over.

I somewhat arranged it so that Hinata-san and Yozora's seats were closer together, even if by just a bit.

First of all, Yozora was sitting at the back window. Karin was next to her.

I hadn't explained the situation to Karin, but as a result of stirring her up with, "While I distract Kobato as she keeps clinging to Yozora, you snatch that seat besides her!" she gladly took action without any questions asked.

After Karin and Yozora's refuge was sealed, Hinata-san and Akane-san sat in front of them.

Thereupon, Yozora was glaring at me, so she had probably worked out my plot.

In the end, the seating arrangement ended up as follows →

1 / 11

Identical to when we came, Rika was listening to music while gazing out the window.

On the opposite side of the bus, Yozora rested her chin on her hand while staring out the window with an ill-humored expression, treating Karin— who kept offering her snacks and drinks— coldly in the process. Karin seemed to realize this, as she stopped being

too pushy, and limited herself to poking her nose into Yozora's business in moderation.

In the seat in front of mine were Yukimura and Aoi, who both chattered away while fiddling with their smartphones. They appeared to be looking at a sportswear site. "Yukki~Yukki, isn't this one cute?" "These shoes are fairly good too." "Oooh, they really are!" Only that part of the bus had the same normalfag atmosphere as ever.

Pegasus-san remained in the driver's seat with a sour expression. He had asked me about my late return to the room yesterday evening during breakfast and when I told him that all of us were playing a game, he pouted, "Why wouldn't you invite me too....." I'm terribly sorry.

Beside me was the extremely good-humored Kobato, enjoying the scenery. Sometimes Sena would try to get closer with sweets, but she'd be turned down with all of Kobato's might.

The sweets that'd get denied by Kobato were tossed into Maria's mouth, who was sitting behind Sena.

Behind me were Hinata-san and Akane-san, just as when we came. They had spread out a heap of handouts and were having some kind of serious meeting going by the looks on their faces. It was probably related to the Christmas party.

The Christmas party, organized by the student council, was to be held in St. Chronica Academy's gymnasium on the 24th of December. It was the last big event to be held by this year's student council, consisting of Hinata-san and the others, in which they played the leading part. After that, most tasks would be taken over by the new student council, or something like that.

.....Come to think of it, when are the elections for the next student council?

If I remember correctly, we had a discussion of whether we'd announce anyone for candidacy during homeroom several days after the cultural festival had ended, and no one from our class spoke up. I don't think I heard anything else related to the student council elections after that. I don't recall that kind of topic coming up when I was helping the student council last week, either.

"That's why this..... and like that..... we'll do it like this....."

"Muu..... This part's hard, isn't it....."

I heard Hinata-san and Akane-san discuss behind me.

It'd be bad to interrupt their serious meeting, so I spoke up to Aoi.

"Hey, Aoi."

"Yes? What is it, Kodaka-kun?"

2 / 11

From the back, Aoi stuck only her head out into my direction.

"It's been bugging me somewhat, but has the next student council been decided upon already?"

"The next? Only the president and vice-president seem to almost be decided. When the winter break's over there'll be a vote of confidence and with that, they'll be officially elected."

"A vote of confidence means there's only one candidate, right? And only a president and vice-president....."

"That's right," Aoi said and pouted her lips, "I wished people were more determined. Well, I guess it's Hinata-san's fault for being overly active this year, so now the position has a difficult image to it....."

"Yeah....."

Even in just that one week I'd been there, we had been very busy helping with various committees and club activities, besides the usual tasks.....

Knowing that, it is understandable that even those who're motivated in their own capacity would hesitate to join the student council. Even when considering the advantage of extra participation marks for exams, it wouldn't seem worth it at all. It would also be impossible to avoid being compared to Hinata-san and the others.

"So what kind of person is the next student council president?"

That person was willing to take up the duties themselves, even though they know what kind of difficult job they'll be facing. I honestly thought that's impressive.

"It's me."

"What?"

Not immediately getting that Aoi's reply had been directed at my question, I asked back without thinking.

"I'm thinking of becoming the next student council president. No one else was nominated before the deadline, so I turned out to be the candidate."

"Seriously....."

"By the way, Karin's the next vice-president."

"So the current treasurer and secretary are becoming the president and vice-president?"

If there were no other candidates, it certainly is the right thing to do, but.....

"The next treasurer and secretary haven't been decided yet, right?"

"Nor has the person for general affairs."

3 / 11

".....Will you two be alright on your own?"

I was worried, but Aoi had no anxious air about her at all.

"Well, we'll somehow manage by asking friends for help until the new members have been decided."

.....If I remember correctly, the president can choose people from the students as members in case there's a vacant seat among the executive staff. I hope they find the other members quickly.

"Yusa~Yusa, I will help out too."

"Yes. Of course I'll rely on you, Yukki."

Aoi replied bashfully but gladly towards Yukimura's words.

.....It's a good thing after all, huh? Having friends to rely on during worrisome times.

Behind me, the enthusiastic discussion of the current president-vice-president combo continued.

"This is like earlier..... Like this. Okay?"

"Mumu..... Hmm..... Uh-huh..... Like this..... right?"

".....No, it's more..... like that, see?I explained that earlier, right?"

Akane's voice seemed irritated.

"Hey, hey, there, you see? You replace the 'y' there with the number."

For some reason, Maria cut into Hinata-san and Akane-san's conversation.

"Eh, Maria.....?"

She raised her head and looked around.

Maria was peering into the handout that Hinata-san was holding and while pointing at it, started to explain things like, "Because of that, this is root 3, you see? This becomes 2."

As she did, I also gazed at the mathematics handout that Hinata-san was—— *huh?*

Mathematics handout.....?

"Eh..... What are you doing?"

"As you can see, I'm teaching Hina."

Akane-san said, mixed in with a sigh.

"Yeah..... As expected of an exam student....."

4 / 11

It seems like those two hadn't been doing a student council related meeting, but were studying for exams. They were third-years in high school after all..... Those who planned on taking university entrance exams had to take any free minutes and sacrifice it for studying, I guess.

"Well, entrance exams, you see....."

Akane-san said ambiguously.

".....?"

"Yeah....." Hinata-san also averted her gaze uncomfortably and wept.

"Hmm, that's first-year stuff, right? Can you go to university like that?"

Maria plunged the dagger in her simplemindedness.

First-year stuff.....?

When I took a closer look at the problems, there was really nothing but a huge bunch of problems of a difficulty that even I could solve without further issues.

"Oh, you're reviewing from the basics, huh?" I asked.

"That's it? The basics *are* important, huh?" Maria replied.

"T-That's right. Of course that's it, hahaha. F-First of all, we got to look at the basics, don't we!"

Cold sweat ran down Hinata-san's laughing face.

".....It's December now, right?"

From my comment, Hinata-san's face stiffened.

".....Ah, right! So your preparation's already complete and you're making absolutely sure by taking a look at first-year's material like that....."

She wanted to declare, "That's it, of course!" in her usual tone and with her certain ambitious smile, but instead Hinata-san averted her eyes to avoid responding.

Then I suddenly remembered.

The numerous rumors about Hinata-san that Yozora had told me during the athletic festival or those I've heard from the other students when I've helped the student council.

——Hidaka Hinata, third-year. She served two consecutive years as the student council president due to her overwhelming popularity. In great demand as a helper of a great number of sports clubs due to her all-around physical abilities. Being very caring, whilst busy, she didn't turn down help requests for the most part. Adored by her juniors and classmates alike. Cheerful and open-hearted. Refreshing. Acting like a big sister. Reliable.

Kind. Outstanding reflexes. As long as it's the president, she'll somehow manage. Incredibly 5 / 11

strong. Beautiful. Cool...

When I tried thinking it over—— although there had been numerous people who had praised her character, physical abilities, or appearance, there hadn't been one thing directed at the field of studies.

"...You seem to have realized it now, Hasegawa-kun."

Akane-san said with a wry smile,

"When it comes to using her head, Hina is a bit..... no, considerably..... incredibly.....

dull....."

"Eh..... what did you....."

But I stopped myself from finishing *that* phrase,

".....mean by that?"

I had the feeling that there was no need to avoid even the 'what did you say?' that normally rushed out of my mouth, but not doing so was also part of taking responsibility now.

"See, Hina? Hasegawa-kun's so shocked, his language circuit broke down."

"Y-You mustn't act so surprised, Kodaka!"

Hinata-san scolded me as her face turned red.

"S-Sorry..... But Hinata-san, you appeared really smart to me....."

I let my real thoughts slip.

"Fuu..... I should've already warned you about that, Kodaka!"

For some reason, Hinata-san puffed up her chest as if becoming serious and declared in an awe-inspiring tone that wouldn't make you think that she was really a pretty dull person.

"Judging people by their appearance is something only a fool would do—!"

Sound effects like *KIRI—!* and *DOYAAA!* echoed in my head.

"Y-You certainly said that, however.....!"

.....When I had heard it back then, I had been deeply moved, but you know.....!

It was my appearance which led people to get completely bad impressions of me and hence taking me to a value system to not judge people by their appearance, but in this person's case, it was the complete opposite of me..... It was probably because of her appearance 6 / 11

that people got a completely positive impression of her.

She had been the first person to truly not judge me by my appearance. This reversed situation couldn't possibly be.....

Perhaps, Akane-san killed Hinata-san first when Yozora was the apparent werewolf, because she wasn't the type of person suited for that sort of brainy game at all (← putting it nicely) and she wanted to prevent that fact from being made obvious to everyone.

".....So that's..... how it is....."

Hearing a hoarse voice, I shifted my gaze up from Hinata-san.

Before I knew it—— Yozora had stood up from the seat behind her and now looked down upon Hinata-san.

"Y-Yozora.....!"

With a startled expression, Hinata-san looked up at Yozora.

Yozora stared at Hinata-san, who was dumbfounded for a while, and—— the corners of her mouth suddenly curled up into a smirk.

"I see, you're an idiot, huh?"

The thing that Akane-san had been indirect about, Yozora put it super bluntly in the face of her real older sister.

"T-The one calling others idiots is the idiot!"

Hinata-san rebutted with Maria and Kobato quality, to which Yozora laughed scornfully,

"I see..... An idiot....."

Yozora—— without malice or anything of the sort, showed an extremely soft and gentle smile as if she had seen one ray of light in her complete darkness.

"Umumu..... Even though I hoped Yozora especially would never find out..... It's Akane's fault for making me study in the bus....."

In contrast to her little sister, Hinata-san was plainly downhearted.

"Well, it's as you heard, Mikadzuki-san."

Akane-san talked to Yozora while showing a wry smile.

"Hina's an idiot."

7 / 11

"I-I told you not to call me an idiot....."

Ignoring Hinata-san's complaint, Akane-san continued,

".....By the way, it's not just math. She's a perfect dunce in every single subject. Quite frankly, like this, without even daring to speak of university entry..... her graduation will be a close call."

"She's that.....?!"

Maybe it came as a shock after all, as Yozora eyes were wide open as well.

"Unfortunately..... Now, I've got a favor to ask of you, Mikadzuki-san."

"A..... favor?"

"Yeah..... I want you to watch over Hina's studies."

"EH.....?!" "WHAT DID YOU—?!"

Yozora and Hinata-san stared at Akane-san.

"Are you forsaking me, Akane?! My true powers aren't at a level that anyone but you could handle them!"

".....Aren't you saying something incredibly pathetic, Hina? I've got my own studying to do, so I can't supervise you around the clock."

"I-I'm a second-year. Third-year subjects would be too....."

"If you could drag her up until she can honestly understand second-year content, I'll manage what comes after that somehow. Luckily, participation marks are far superior, right.....? I have the slim hope that even if she doesn't quite make the cut in the end of term exams, the teachers might overlook it and let her graduate out of pity."

I wondered whether that wasn't just desperation for the most part, but I went out of my way to shut up.

"To begin with, why me.....?"

"After I did a bit of research, your grades turned out to be excellent, and you're bright.....

to the extent that you've smashed me as the [Werewolf]. Plus, more than anything——

You're Hina's little sister."

Yozora's face warped in displeasure.

".....Justifying it because I'm her little sister..... I don't think it's my job to look after my sister....."

"That's reasonable," Akane-san nodded in agreement,

"But what if your sister happened to end up in your grade?"

8 / 11

"Gu.....?!"

Her face stiffening, Yozora alternated her gaze between Hinata-san and Akane-san.

When she would advance into the next grade and Hinata-san failed to graduate, they'd both end up in the third year together.

Even if the siblings wouldn't end up in the same class, if they were in the same grade, they were likely to at least meet. If it became known that the two of them were sisters, various unpleasant rumors might surface too.

".....Oi."

Yozora spoke up to Hinata-san with a heavy voice.

"Y-Yes.....?"

".....Mind calling me 'Sensei' from now on?"

She suggested something outrageous all of a sudden!

"W-Why would I have to address my little sister in such a fashion?!"

".....Are you fine being my classmate..... no, being my junior? When I graduate, do you want to hand me a bouquet as an enrolled student?"

"I-I-I'm not that much of an idiot!"

.....Taking into consideration that she was also having a lot of hardships with first-year problems, it's scary that I can't quite deny the possibility of that happening.

".....Oi, Moron-kid."

"M-Moron-kid.....?!It's been on my mind since earlier, Yozora..... Although we're siblings, I am your senpai. Talking to me like that is....."

"We'll be classmates in four months, won't we?"

"I-I'm still your senpai for now!"

Why the hell are you doing using polite speech then? Wait, 'For now'.....?

"Listen up, Moron-kid."

"Yes!"

Hinata-san faltered under the power of Yozora's stare.

"Even I will use polite speech if there's someone deserving my respect. However, you're a different case, tofu head. If you find that irritating, then show me that your brain can acquire something like average intelligence..... From tomorrow onwards..... no, the second we arrive at school, we'll study."

9 / 11

Suddenly, Yozora didn't show the tiniest bit of mercy to her sister, who had been shirking until earlier. Once she went on the offensive, she was in best form.

"I-I'm busy with student council work....."

"Please leave that to us," Akane-san interjected, "I'll put Aoi in charge of the Christmas party preparations. We have to let her gain experience before it's too late, right? So I'd like Mikadzuki-san to be at ease and drill Hina into shape."

"Understood. I'll show you that I can pull Moron-kid's brain up from a chimpanzee to australopithecus level."

"Fuhaha— You're making quite the bold announcement, little sister!"

"Why do you look so self-important..... I'm just making sure, but do you even know what a australopithecus is?"

"O-Of course I do! Look..... it's something that existed way back, right.....?"

".....As expected, you know that much."

"T-That's a given! Fufun— It's a celebrity after all, australopithecus....."

.....*She probably mixed it up with Aristotélēs.*

"T-This ape is....."

Yozora groaned while massaging her temples.

"W-Why would you make such a hopeless face, Yozora?!"

Next to Hinata-san, Akane-san shrugged. When our eyes met, Akane-san winked meaningfully.

.....Perhaps Akane-san began to teach her in the bus on purpose so that Yozora would notice it.

"Jeez....."

Yozora sighed and sat down. She then began to fiddle with her cell phone. Her expressions seemed gentle in some regards. Yozora was still Yozora, so she probably noticed Akane-san's intentions and dared to go with it. If that was the case, then Yozora could even have the intention to make up with Hinata-san.

Having that hope, I, too, sat down.

Then I received a mail.

"Hm.....?"

Sender—— Mikadzuki Yozora.

10 / 11

Subject—— [Thanks]

Content—— [you damn madller]

.....Madller.....? Oh..... 'meddler'? Mistyping is just like her.

Chapter 4: Backlight

It was after school on the Monday that dawned following the Neighbors Club's and student council's relaxation trip.

Before I went to the Neighbors Club room, I headed for the student council room to check up on Yozora, who was supposed to be tutoring Hinata-san, and happened across Jinguuji Karin.

"Ohh, Hasegawa-kun."

"Yo. You on your way to the student council's room too?"

But Karin shook her head,

"I want to make an appearance in the clubroom today."

"Clubroom..... You mean the Board Game Club?"

"Yeah. If I don't give them my love from time to time, my cute little lovers will feel lonely."

"L-Love?! Lover..... Wait, lover S?!"

Seeing me at a loss, Karin faintly raised the corners of her lips,

"That's right. The Bodge Club's four members are all my lovers. If I put it dirty, you could say they're my—— harem."

"H-Harem, huh?Wait, are you freaking serious?"

"Of course."

While I doubted her true character, I stared at Karin's face, but I could see no sign that she was joking.

"A harem..... I never thought that such a thing would exist outside of the Middle East or 2D

romcoms....."

"Fufu, I made it so."

Karin smiled mischievously; a hint of pride in her voice.

"Wait, did you make a move on Yozora like that?"

"My love knows no bounds."

Going by her words alone, she did sound cool.

".....So I really wanted to add Yozora-oneesama to my harem, but..... I decided to give up on that."

"Give up?!"

1 / 21

I was dumbfounded by her sudden utterance, but Karin remained indifferent.

"I came to understand that there's another person far more suitable for Onee-sama."

"....."

I didn't dare ask whom Karin was referring to.

"Still, you withdrew pretty easily, huh? And you were going at her so hard....."

"If you come to like someone, you act immediately. If you understand that it's futile, it's best to just let them go and start scouting for your next target. That's my way."

"What a manly way of life."

I said nonchalantly, but I soon regretted my insensibility.

Karin expressed a faint wry smile,

"I really wished I had been born a man."

"....."

Those were some heavy words.

"Back in the day, I thought 'it's enough just being by their side,' but one after another, each and every girl I liked got snatched away by boys. Moreover, I've been approached for love consultation from people I liked. Stuff like 'You're my friend, so I'd like to open my heart.....' I came to hate it and so I decided to act immediately."

.....She was totally mumbling by now, but Karin was still Karin, and after having suffered through various obstacles, she ended up as what she is now.

"Even so, isn't creating a harem a bit much.....?"

"It's fine, isn't it? Everyone's happy."

"Wait, aren't you meant to be a real Christian? Is that kind of thing alright with the religion?"

"Beats me. At least it's not explicitly forbidden."

"You're being defiant....."

"When I first entered entered this academy I received my Baptism to become a Christian super fast to try and grab the attention of someone I liked. Now that I've been rejected, I don't care about Christian teachings or whatever anymore."

Karin calmly stated something that was bound to anger faithful believers if they heard it.

"I only believe in what's inside me. Not even God can stop me from that."

2 / 21

".....You're unshakeable, huh....."

I sighed with a bit of admiration. Although it could be called a kind of chuunibyou, it wasn't the chuunibyou Kobato had, but being so seriously the contrary was quite amazing.

"Well, the Christian name Gabriella suits me, so I didn't mind converting. And I like crosses.

They're cool."

"I did have the feeling that those numerous crosses were overdoing it no matter how much of a Christian one is, but perhaps this huge number of jingly crosses were....."

"Of course they were fashion. The rosario you get from the priest on your baptism is uncool, so I put in a bag. What I'm wearing right now are all accessories I've collected in my spare time. Look at this one, ."

She proudly brought a bracelet on her wrist close to me, which had small crosses stuck onto it.

When I took a closer look, it really had small skulls carved into the center of the cross that you would only notice upon a close inspection.

".....You really make the best of everything, huh.....?"

When I praised her for now, Karin got bashful with an "I know, right?"

"It's convenient that we're even allowed to wear all these silver accessories to school as long as you say 'It's because I'm Christian', right? Even though I really have no reason whatsoever."

I started to think that she'd go unexpectedly well with Yozora with her cynical manner of speaking.

".....Well then, I'll be on my way to do some lewd things in the clubroom, alright? The apostle who fell into the deepest of dark, is I: Junguui † Gabriella † Karin....."

"R-Right..... See you then."

Embarrassed by her farewell, I saw Karin off with a vague expression.



As soon as I parted from Karin, I came across Takayama Kate.

"Yo, Onii-chan."

"Hey."

3 / 21

While scratching her backside with her right hand, she slightly raised her left and greeted me. I greeted her back.

"Perfect timing," she said.

"For what?"

"To tell the truth, I've got a favor to ask of Kobato-chan. Will she be coming today?"

"She's probably arrived by now. What's up?"

I had thought that Kobato and Kate were the contrary of Maria and I and had had no real exchanges between them.

"Do you know that we're having a Christmas Mass in the chapel on December 24th?"

"Yeah, I saw it on a poster."

A Christmas Mass was being held in the St. Chronica Academy chapel hall on December 24th.

On the same day, the student council organized Christmas party was to be held in the gymnasium for students only, but everyone was free to take part in the mass.

"We're going to have a play, you see. I'd like Kobato-chan to participate."

"Hmm, a play?Why Kobato?"

Sounding oddly proud, Kate continued,

"It's been decided that our Maria will play the leading part in the play, you know?"

"Maria?! The leading part?!"

"When I told her that we'll be doing a play for the mass, for whatever reason she said that she wanted to play the leading role by herself, you see..... I wonder if that's also thanks to Onii-chan and the others?"

Kate said, seemingly happy from the bottom of her heart.

"And so, if Maria plays the leading part, I thought that her partner should of course be Kobato-chan. After all, it's like, Maria's big moment and all, so I'd want to have an appropriate cast prepared for her too, right? She isn't as cute as Maria, but, well, Kobato-chan is adorable in her own way and I think she's the most suitable person to make Maria look good!"

She had gone into full-on sister mode by now and said some rather

rude things about Kobato, but I agreed that Kobato would make the best combo with Maria.

Even in the independent films 'Princess Kobato' or 'The Legend of the Great Kasiwasky Suenna' she had been able to enchant viewers with her masterful acting.

4 / 21

Plus,

".....I'd also like to see Kobato and Maria act together."

"I know right?!" Kate was delighted to see I agreed.

"By the way, what kind of play is it?"

"It's 'The Gift of the Magi'. A Christmas standard."

"Aah, that one....."

I don't think I've ever read it properly, but it was a popular story, so even I knew the gist of it.

It was about a close husband and wife and how they went about buying presents for each other.

"I want Maria to be the husband, Jim, and Kobato-chan to be the housewife, Della."

".....Those two playing a close husband and wife.....?"

Kate smiled wryly as I was made a complicated face.

"That's because, you know, they're so close that they quarrel and such....."

I wondered whether there was a close married couple who'd always quarrel and scream at each other like they did, but their real relationship wasn't relevant as long as they could act the part.

"Should I talk to Kobato then? Or will you ask her?"

"I will," Kate replied.

So together we headed to the Neighbors Club room.

On the way,

"Speaking of which, Onii-chan, you were chatting with Jinguuji-san earlier, right?"

While we were walking, Kate suddenly asked that.

"Hmm? Yeah. You know her?"

"Aah..... Yeah..... Well, a bit....."

".....?"

It felt out of place that she would beat around the bush like that, considering it was Kate.

".....Could you have been the girl that Karin went Christian for to attract her attention.....?"

5 / 21

"T-That's sharp of you, Onii-chan....."

Kate stared at me, her face full of admiration and wonder. It appeared I was right.

Considering that Karin herself said that she received her Baptism shortly after entering the academy, and the only Christian person on the staff that was the same age as her that I knew of was Kate, it didn't really take much brainpower to work it out.

Smiling meekly, Kate explained:

"It was the first time I had been confessed to by a girl, so I was greatly worried at the time, you see. It seems that Jinguuji-san is now much more capable of giving the other party their space, but back then she was very pushy and didn't give a dime about my circumstances. All of a sudden she came and said that she had converted to Christianity to get to know me better. Frankly, it was repulsive. I also disliked treating the girl that longed for me like a stalker and I wondered whether it was a test of my tolerance as a sister, but in the end I had neither the resolution nor time to accept her feelings....."

Kate sighed deeply, looking up at the heavens.

"Haa~..... I was young in those days, you know?"

"Hang on, you're still young now!"

I tsukkomi'ed her before I knew it, as she expressed a distant look.

"I am, huh..... I'm still young and in the "now". To this day I'm still bad at love consultation, you know?"

"Love, huh..... Seems tough."

I muttered earnestly.

If we're talking about people I liked, there are 'multiple'.

I knew the feeling of wanting to date someone.

At the same time, I've got something more important than love right now. If love will destroy what I hold most dear, then I would rather endure not loving anyone, no matter the cost.

If I think about it calmly, in addition to this seemingly cool resolution, there are a lot of uncool, pathetic hesitations as well. Things like, "I'm not sure what you're supposed to do when you're going out, it's scary," or like, "What if I begin to hate the other party precisely because we started going out together instead?" or even, "It's fully possible that I will be the one who will be hated," and "If it all comes falling down, what do I do then?". The negative mentality always seems to resurface.

Being able to charge right in with no fear of messing up, like the way Karin had, was pretty amazing in my book.

Even though love has more of a happy and enjoyable image to it, the more seriously you

think about it, the scarier it becomes.

In today's society, it's nothing special to have people who deny that love is a wonderful thing, but that could certainly not be taken as the unconditional truth.

"I guess I'll just have to fall in love by myself first, huh?"

Kate said with a bitter smile.

"Shouldn't that be fine once you've found your significant other?"

Carelessly, I said something that might have sounded like it was a

suitable thing to say.

"Significant other, huh....." Kate cast a fleeting glance in my direction.

".....Then, how about you, Onii-chan?"

"What about me?"

"Then how about falling in love with me?"

She flung those words at me bluntly.

When I quietly assessed Kate's profile, I understood that her tone meant the opposite of her bright red cheeks.

I couldn't dodge anymore.

If Kate had asked me seriously, then I had to think about it seriously, too.

"Ehm——"

"I-It was a joke, a joke!"

Not waiting for my response, Kate slapped me on the back repeatedly.

"Wha——?!"

"Seriously, jeez! If you won't do me the favor to ignore that, I won't be able to stay here a second longer, alright! Please don't make that serious face when I'm trying to make a joke here, Onii-chan!"

"J-Joke.....?"

"I'm a sister, right? I'm already married to God. Hahaha."

"I-Is that so."

7 / 21

"It is. Now, let's end our idle talk here, I've gotta hurry up and go find Kobato-chan!"

Kate suddenly quickened her pace and went on ahead.

I didn't point out that even her ears had gone red.

Takayama Kate had been through a lot.

Jinguuji Karin had been through a lot.

Mikadzuki Yozora had been through a lot, and so had Hidaka Hinata.

Everyone had been through a lot—— there wasn't anyone who hadn't.

I still wasn't fully aware that I couldn't let my guard down, whether I wanted to or not, in the face of the harsh reality that I was experiencing by stopping to pretend I didn't notice, see, or hear those around me.

It was only natural that the universe wouldn't just automatically place the protagonist at its center and make everyone and everything else revolve around him. My head understood that, yet, I really didn't.

☺

Close to the chapel we happened across Kobato, who was heading to the clubroom.

When we asked her about Kate's Christmas mass play, Kobato agreed unexpectedly willingly.

"Kukuku..... That foolish underling of God..... How foolish it is to compete in a play with my great self..... I shall give her a taste of her own foolishness....."

.....*Well, maybe not that unexpected.*

Playing the leading part together with Maria—— The idea that Kobato would readily accept wasn't impossible to predict anymore.

I parted with Kate and Kobato, did a U-turn, and once more headed for the student council room.

On the way, I met yet another acquaintance.

With a slight wave of her hand, I was greeted from within a group of unfamiliar students (all girls) by Ootomo Akane-san. She walked towards me while being showered by high-pitched voices like, "KYAAA, she greeted Senpai!".

8 / 21

Walking next to her with a sour expression was none other than Mikadzuki Yozora.

"Yo, Hasegawa-kun."

"Hey."

After I returned Akane-san's greeting, I looked at Yozora-san.

"Yozora, you aren't watching over Hinata-san's studying?"

"For now she's been provided with the basic problems of second year middle school. I'll cut her down if she isn't done when I get back in half an hour. For every wrong answer, I'll peel off one of her fingernails."

Yozora replied with a serious expression and glazed eyes.

".....Doesn't seem like I..... need to ask about your mood, huh?"

Yozora nodded slowly.

"Yeah..... The thought of being in the same class as my sister next year..... Just no....."

"I-Isn't it too soon to give up?! There's still hope! If you believe hard enough, your dream'll come true! I know you can do it!"

I tried to provide the totally 'in give-up mode' Yozora with some empty encouragement.

".....Hmph..... To think I'm taking the responsibility for this..... The most I can do is comfort myself in other people's bathrooms....."

Yozora mumbled meekly so that only I could hear her.

"You're still saying such....."

She probably wanted to pass it off as a defiant gag, but it failed the moment her face went red. *Rather, it's really embarrassing, so I'd like you to stop doing it.*

"B-By the way, what are you two doing together?"

I pleaded Akane-san to help me change the topic.

"Hina's 'preoccupied', so I asked Mikadzuki-san to help me with some work."

"Really.....?"

I stared at Yozora in surprise.

"Hmph..... I really don't like cleaning up after that gorilla head. But that sludge-for-brains hasn't got a second for anything else but studying right now, so I've got no choice, okay?"

9 / 21

Yozora cursed her sister with a face like she was truly fed up from her innermost depths, but doesn't helping out with the jobs regardless actually mean she's just dishonest or tsundere?

Just like Kobato and Maria, in reality, she was a very caring person.....

"If it's fine with you, I'll lend a hand too."

Yozora shook her head.

"No, it's fine this time."

"No need to feel guilty about asking for my help, you know?"

".....You want to clean the tennis club room up that badly? How surprisingly lecherous of you..... Completely like me, huh ///....."

I've already said that you seriously need to stop that masochistic gag that turns your face red every time!

"C-Certainly, I shouldn't help with that thing, huh."

"Well, seems like Aoi and Kusunoki-san will come too, so we'll be done in a flash," said Akane-san.

"Yukimura too?"

"Yeah. Seems like she'll come and help the student council for a while as well," Yozora added.

"I see....."

Yukimura is Aoi's friend after all.

It's good to give friends a hand.

.....And yet, why do I have this unsettling feeling.

"Well then, shall we, Mikadzuki-san?"

"Yes..... Later, Kodaka."

"Y-Yeah."

I told them that they could call me anytime if they needed me, and parted ways with Yozora and Akane-san.

Well, I was able to check on how Yozora was going, guess I'll go to the clubroom now.....

☺

10 / 21

BANG!

"I'LL DEFINITELY INVENT A DRUG THAT MAKES BOOBIES GROW!"

"Heh?!"

The second I arrived in front of chapel lounge 4, the clubroom door was viciously thrown open and an extremely upset and yelling Rika came bursting out.

"R-Rika.....? What are you doing?"

".....Ah. Kodaka?"

Rika pouted her lips and looked at me with upturned eyes.

On closer inspection I noticed her eyes were a bit teary.

Rika wiped her tear away briskly and then glared at me for some reason.

".....Kodaka, I want you to give me an honest answer."

"O-Okay?"

"Do you like huge breasts?"

".....Depends on the degree."

I wondered why she would ask a question like that all of a sudden, but Rika had an extremely serious expression, so I answered seriously in turn.

"If that's the case, then do you like Sena-senpai's size?"

"I do."

".....Whose size do you like more, Sena-senpai's or mine?"

".....Sena's."

It this was only about breasts and only about my very individual opinion, then there was no other possible answer.

However, it didn't seem a very desirable reply as far as Rika was concerned,

"FUCK—!! If that's the way it is, then I'll manipulate all of mankind's genes, make everyone in the world have big bouncy boobs and destroy the value of those mammary monstrosities!"

"Eh?! Wai— Oi, RIKA?!"

Rika declared her unbelievably far-reaching ambitions like a true mad scientist and ran off 11 / 21

at a furious pace.

Putting aside how serious she was about that, her proposal could be essentially be compared to the logic of "If I kill all the women that have bigger breasts than me, my breasts will be the biggest ones relatively, won't they....." that Yozora had concocted some time ago.

The point wasn't about the absolute scale but to somehow make it about comparison——

The essence wasn't to win herself, but to make the others lose..... A logic that manifested from hostility.

"The heck was that about.....?"

Still utterly bewildered, I entered the clubroom.

Inside I found Sena, alone. She made an awkward expression and stood up.

"Did something happen with Rika?" I asked.

".....She apologized."

Sena said with a sigh.

"Apologized? Rika did?"

Sena nodded,

".....She apologized to me for making you grab her breasts."

I unintentionally spouted out from that surprise attack.

So Rika told her about what happened back on the trip.....

Of course, I was well aware of the predicament I had got myself into—— I had asked Sena to endure her feelings as I wasn't going to go out with anyone in the Neighbors Club. Then I went and jumped into the hot springs with another girl from the Neighbors Club and fondled her breasts, so it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that I betrayed Sena.

And that's why I had to apologize to Sena myself.

.....But Rika beat me to the punch..... There's nothing I can do about that.

I stepped up to Sena and bowed deeply. I had to apologize sincerely.

"It's just as you heard from Rika. The night of the trip, I went into the mixed bath with Rika and touched her breasts. I'm sorry."

".....Is it true that you met in the outdoor mixed bath only by chance?"

She asked in a monotone voice. With my head lowered, I couldn't see her expression, but I could imagine her being angry right now.

12 / 21

"Yeah."

".....Why? Why would you intentionally go to the outdoor mixed bath? I can't see how you *wouldn't* have ulterior motives."

I raised my head and began my explanation to Sena, who scowled at me with scornful eyes.

"I-I had no ulterior motives at all! Even if there were women in there, I thought it'd only be old ladies at best!"

"Eh..... You couldn't possibly have a thing for mature women? So you actually fantas——"

"AS IF!"

I quickly negated that cruel misunderstanding.

"I entered the mixed bath because..... well..... If I had gone into the men's bath again, your father would've come along too and probably invited himself to wash my back like he does every damn time and it completely freaks me out! I couldn't relax at all like that!"

"Ah....."

Sena made an enervated face.

".....What are you doing, Papa.....?"

It seemed like I had her convinced. I had the feeling that it brought down Pegasus-san's standing from his daughter's point of view, but as it was the truth, it couldn't be helped.

".....You only went into the bath with Rika, right?"

".....Y-Yeah."

The 'only' part made me uncomfortable, but I nodded.

"Y-..... You didn't do anything dirty, right?"

"O-Of course not!"

"Haa....." sighed Sena.

"If that's the case, then I'll forgive you..... Actually, I'm not really angry at all."

She said in an easy tone.

"Eh.....? You're not angry.....? For real?"

Annoyed by my surprise, Sena began to explain her reasoning like a teacher would to children.

"Listen, Kodaka, what you touched weren't breasts."

13 / 21

".....What?"

I raised an eyebrow.

"Any kind of low-class meat has a bit of fat, right? That's what you touched."

"You've said something beyond belief just now....."

"Not so much as angry, you could say that I rather pity the fact you've experienced nothing but a cheap taste. By the way, I'm the real deal top-quality marbled meat."

Sena bend forward to display her own bountiful breasts.

".....Th-That's really something only you would say....."

I gulped nervously and watched intently.

Her boobs—— Her breasts could only be appropriately described as overwhelming.

"I know right?" Sena smiled proudly, but soon her expression clouded.

".....But when I told Rika that, she just snapped....."

".....So that's why....."

I had thought that I had lifted Rika's complex about her own appearance, more or less, during that outdoor bath fiasco.

So I honestly wondered why she was getting that upset about her breasts (or lack of) now.

If Sena had just gotten angry like anyone else and verbally abused Rika and I, it wouldn't have been a problem.

However, far from angered, it was as if she didn't even care: "Your chest doesn't even deserve to be called breasts, so it doesn't matter if they were touched."——

Making the one who came to apologize upset..... That was an outrageously negative social skill.

"Even though I went out of my way to forgive her with this generous heart of mine..... I don't get it."

Sena said, tilting her head in puzzlement.

Oh, I know you don't.....

Sena threw my baffled self a sidelong glance before turning the clubroom's game console on as she always did.

For the time being, I sent Rika a message saying: **[High-class marbled meat really is delicious, but I also like the sensation of eating lean meat, you know?]** .

14 / 21

Several seconds later, she replied: **[If that's supposed to cheer me up, I'm gonna beat you to death, you know? #]**

.....Cheering people up is hard.

I cast a sidelong glance at Sena as she played her game before I sat down, took out my textbook, and started studying.

"You're gonna study?"

Sena said, taking a fleeting glance in my direction.

"Yep."

"Speaking of which, Yozora's teaching the student council president,

isn't she?"

"Yeah."

"Can that ill-natured vixen really act as a tutor?"

"Looks like it. She's actually quite caring, isn't she? She's helping out the student council in Hinata's stead too, and that seems to please Akane-san."

"Hmph....."

Sena seemed to become ill-humored for some reason.

"Jeez..... Studying like their lives depended on it, being ordinary's tough, huh!"

Sena blurted in a somewhat sulky tone.

".....Speaking of which, have you decided what you're going to do after you graduate yet?"

I was fascinated to find out what path Sena - a girl who could do just about anything without putting much effort into it - would choose.

"Hm..... I'm planning to go to university for now."

"Further education, huh.....? What school is your first choice?"

"I don't know yet, but something close by would be good."

Speaking of the universities around here, even the best among them was only ranked at an average level nationwide.

I believed that for Sena, no matter which of those universities she entered, it'd be a waste, but I didn't say it. Pegasus-san, Stellar-san, or perhaps even Aoi, had surely told her that already.

".....If you also find something you'd like to do eventually, it's all good, isn't it?"

When I voiced my honest thoughts, Sena pouted her lips.

15 / 21

"What's with this strangely arrogant attitude? Saying that much,

have you decided what to do yet?"

".....Well, more or less."

"Eh? What will it be? Tell me, tell me!"

Sena's hands stopped on the controller and she leant towards me with a face full of curiosity.

".....Further education. My current goal is to get into Tohya University's Educational Department."

"Educational Department.....? Kodaka, do you wanna become a teacher?"

".....Yep."

I averted my eyes from Sena and nodded slightly. It felt weirdly embarrassing for some reason.....

It was a first for me to talk about my dreams with someone outside of my family.

"Huh..... A teacher, you say? High school? Middle school?"

"Elementary."

""

Sena looked at me with reproachful eyes.

"Kodaka, don't tell me you're a lolicon after all?"

".....Listen here, you. You're being rude to all the elementary teachers out there."

".....S-Sorry."

It was nothing to make fun of, so when I objected to Sena with a serious tone, she sincerely apologized.

"So, why an elementary teacher?"

".....Because I was bullied when I was in elementary school..... and, you know....."

The details were embarrassing, so I answered vaguely.

On the day that I had met Sora—— The trigger for several classmates of mine to steal my bag in the park was that the teacher, who hadn't known I was a halfie, had lectured me unjustifiably with 'Dying your hair at your age. Are you a delinquent?'.

——If only there had been an adult to help me back then.

That thought had always been at the back of my mind, and that event was not a one-off.

16 / 21

Somewhere along the line, those countless, unreasonable happenings that I experienced formed my dream into 'I want to become an adult who could've saved the past me' before I knew it.

And as the pragmatic step to grant that dream, I decided to become a teacher.

I think that day, concerning the result, I'm glad that I was able to met a friend like Sora.

Being hurt makes it possible to grow and become stronger and kinder.

And yet, I'd rather not have experienced all those unreasonable things. If I could've felt at ease without being hurt in the first place, then I'd rather not be hurt, and if there was ever a person that could've stepped in to help me immediately, I'd have wanted their assistance.

".....You've thought this through surprisingly thorough, haven't you?"

Sena said, her face brimming with admiration.

"It's normal," I returned, all cool-like.

I wasn't being modest; there were countless people who're giving it their all to achieve their dreams. My father even investigated how to best achieve his purpose by the time he chose his high school and carefully gathered information. And compared to that, I was being pretty slow.

"Normal, huh....."

After she muttered that seriously for some reason, Sena turned her

back on me and resumed her game.

And I got back to studying.

However, before long, Sena spoke up again.

"Hey, how come Kobato-chan isn't here yet?"

".....It turns out that Kobato is gonna participate in a Christmas mass play, so I think she won't be able to come for a while due to practice."

"EEEH—?!"

Sena let the controller drop with a crash.

"Say it isn't so..... I can't see Kobato-chan..... Ah, but..... a play.....?! Is Kobato-chan playing the leading part again?!"

"Yeah. It's called the 'The Gift of the Magi'. She's doing it with Maria."

"The Christmas mass is on December 24th..... It's depressing that I can't see Kobato-chan until then, but I'm totally looking forward to a play with Kobato-chan in the leading role.....

I can't wait.....!"

17 / 21

"I take you're going to watch it, huh?"

"Of course!"

Kobato was probably going to hate it just like during the middle school cultural festival, but it was futile to try and stop her anyway, so I didn't. And I'd of course go and watch it too.

"Aah, but....."

All of a sudden, Sena heaved a sigh.

"Hm?"

".....Kobato-chan and Maria are practising the play, and Yozora is tutoring, right? Rika got angry and left..... What's Yukimura doing?"

"Yukimura's helping the student council out, too."

"So then, it's just you and me with free time, isn't it?"

".....I haven't got any free time, see? I'm studying——"

Just then my ringtone went off.

The name displayed on the screen read 'Ootomo Akane'.

".....Sorry, just a second."

I said and answered the call.

[Yo, Hasegawa-kun. You said earlier that we could call you anytime we needed a hand, right?]

"Oh, yeah."

[Sorry that it's on such short notice, but would you mind helping us out now? We've got some manual labor to do that could use a man's hand.]

"Understood. I'm on my way."

[Thanks. You're getting bonus points for the immediate reply, you know? The place is——]

Akane-san told me where to go, and I ended the call.

"I've gotta leave for a bit."

"Ah, okay....." said Sena.

I was weirdly happy that I had been summoned without restraint and didn't notice that Sena wasn't happy at all.

18 / 21



Around the time the sun had completely set, I had finished helping Akane-san and returned to the clubroom.

In it, Sena was silently playing her gal game by herself.

"You're late."

Remarked Sena, once again only sending a quick glance in my direction.

"Yeah. They delivered a heap of Christmas tree decorations, but there was already lots in the storehouse. Emptying it out and packing them all back in was serious business. Kinda like an RL puzzle game."

"Hmph....."

Seemingly uninterested, Sena continued with her game.

However, her hands on the controller suddenly froze.

"Hey, Kodaka."

"Hm?"

Still staring at the screen, Sena mumbled lonely.

".....Could it be that I'm..... not popular?"

TOOK YOU LONG ENOUGH!

I held myself back from shouting that max-power retort, but doing so required an incredible amount of willpower.

".....W-Why would you think that?"

".....Because..... Nobody approved of the idea I proposed for the cultural festival, I couldn't find anyone to pair up with for the three-legged-race during the athletic festival and couldn't participate..... Even though I'm the best in the grade, nobody asks me to tutor them, nobody asks me to play the leading role in a movie like Kobato-chan, nobody has ever called me and asked me to help out like they did with you earlier....."

Considering this was Sena, she said it with a rare, faltering and gloomy expression.

".....You want people to like you??"

"Haa? Of course I do."

"I-I see."

Ohh, so that's how it is, is it?

Her usual behavior was just too arrogant, and so I thought she didn't care about what other people think, but thinking about it, she wanted friends and joined the Neighbors Club after all...

In contrast, Maria and I had been obliged to join, Yukimura, Rika, and Kobato had followed my lead and joined, so the only one among the Neighbors Club members who has the genuine wish to make friends was in reality Sena.

".....What should I do to become it, I wonder..... Popular....."

"Aren't you surrounded by a lot of guys in class? It wouldn't be wrong to call you popular, in a way....."

"Not like that. I don't mean manservants following me blindly, I mean..... real equals....."

people I can just normally rely on of sorts....."

".....I think it'll be simple for you, though."

"Eh?"

When I voiced my honest opinion, Sena made a puzzled face.

"It'll be fine if you stop acting self-important."

"Haa? When have I ever acted self-important?"

YOU STILL HAVEN'T REALIZED?! I omitted the aforementioned full-power rebuttal.

"And stop getting angry right away like that, even if you're irritated, endure it. Also, stop looking down on others. If you can even match with your surroundings, then, if it's you, you'll probably be popular in a flash."

Knowing that those were the most troublesome things about Sena, I said it bluntly.

"Why must I, a genius, bring myself down to the same level as those

ignoramus?"

As expected, Sena was extremely stubborn.

Is it impossible after all.....?

When I leaked a small sigh and averted my eyes, I caught a glimpse of the game screen|the screen with the game on it entered my vision.

It seemed to have the same game system like [Heart-Throb Memory Days] and various

numbers displaying stats were being shown.

20 / 21

"Think of it as a game."

I blurted out. It was an idea that had suddenly struck me.

".....A game?"

Sena looked puzzled, so I gave her an explanation.

"Even in your beloved [TokiMemo], you have to alter your stats so that it matches the girl you're going for and choose certain words or presents to raise their affection levels, right?"

For example, even if the words you wanna say and the presents you wanna give are different from what you should do, you wouldn't be able to clear their route. Instead you choose the appropriate one for the character, right?"

".....Yeah."

"You don't need to lower your own level, think of it as *mastering skills* like 'be kind' or

'endure it' or 'don't get angry'. You can do it in games, so you should be able to do so in reality, right? You *are* a genius after all."

Even though I said it myself, it was still utter nonsense.

Games and reality are completely different.

However, it seemed to make an impression on Sena.

"Now I get it..... So I have to think of it as a game where the goal is to clear the route of common people, right? You've proposed something very interesting. Of course, if it's a game, there's no way that I can't clear it."

Sena laughed fearlessly——

Translator notes and references

[1] Blushing emote of some sort.

[2] [Heart-Throb Memory Days], or "*Tokimeki Memory Days*", shortened to [TokiMemo]. The first Dating game that Sena played that appeared in the first LN volume and first anime series.

Chapter 5: Black Hawk Down

Four days had passed since it became normal for Yozora to go in and out of the student council room, Kobato had decided to be the main heroine in the play, and Sena had been trying to raise her popularity somehow. It was now the lunch break on Friday.

As usual, I was with Rika in the rikatory eating the bento I made that morning.

She'd burst out angrily from the clubroom after hearing Sena's remarks, but it seemed that her rage had subsided by the next day. Regardless, she had been holed up in the lab since then studying how to "Level out the differences between the boobs in the entire world.

~Despite the fact that If you look at it from mount Olympus, all valleys and mountains look the same~"

The only member to visit the clubroom on a daily basis was Sena. I, on the other hand, got called to help with the student council work quite often, and Kate had asked for help setting up the Christmas shop, thus the time I spent in the clubroom was quite sparse.

From what I'd heard from her personally and from the rumors floating around, Sena's plans for popularity seemed to be taking steps both forward and backwards.

However, it seemed that the number of people who worshipped Sena was increasing slightly, so perhaps it's okay to say that she was yielding results.

Sena's popularity among the male students was experiencing a rapid rise.

Losing the attitude which looks down on people (on the surface) and adopting a tender style when dealing with others (once again, just on the surface), transformed Sena into the ideal bishoujo in the minds of male students.

"Even if she's that beautiful, those ojou-sama type girls are a bit....." Though she was gathering support from those who distanced themselves from her in the past, and the original

masochistic fans of Sena were also saying things like, “A kind Sena-sama works for me too!” without having their loyalty swayed.

However, this new attitude was dismissed with animosity by the female students as nothing more than “flirting with the boys,” and thus her popularity with them remained as low as ever. And as she was constantly scrutinized by those of the same sex, in addition to the so-called ‘woman’s instinct’, it’s entirely possible that they saw through her act.

On the other hand, Yozora’s reputation with the girls was on the rise.

In similar fashion to the way she had made Karin fall for her in an instant, Yozora’s androgynous looks were always valued by girls and since she was now seen frequently with Akane-san, the tomboyish combo of theirs seemed like it came out of an opera and gave them a lofty, picturesque feeling.

Her manner of speaking was cool and rather blunt but she was also really good at taking care of others, not to mention the fact that her work is proper to say the least.

Now that Yozora had started doing some of the bureaucratic work instead of Hinata-san, who was rather bad at it, the efficiency of the student council increased remarkably. Seeing 1 / 15

Yozora getting work done left and right, Aoi gaped in awe—

“Hinata-san is not needed anymore; Mikadzuki-san should be our president from now on!”

Even Yukimura, who had previously expressed her disappointment in Yozora, had a change of heart, “I seem to have misjudged Yozora-anego.”

No one knows how it leaked, but a rumor started to spread among the students that Mikadzuki Yozora was in fact Hidaka Hinata’s real sister. Thus, Hinata-san’s popularity, which was wild with both sexes from all ages, started rubbing off onto Yozora as well.

There’s Sena who’s idolized by male students.

Then there’s Yozora, whom the female students see as mature and so is rapidly gaining popularity throughout the entire school.

“.....What I’m doing shouldn’t be that different from either Sena or Yozora. So I wonder why it’s only me who isn’t becoming more popular.....”

And then there’s me, who for some reason was complaining to Rika about the whole matter.

Lending a hand in the preparation for the Christmas mass and gathering, as well as helping Akane-san and Aoi with student council work..... It seemed that even my efforts to be more attentive to others had failed miserably. My reputation as a delinquent remains fast.

From the time I fled from the Neighbors Club and began helping the student council up until the present, the official story seems to be that “They say he did something and now has to help the student council to make it up.” Or something like that.

“Yuu ashk why but dontshuu know olready?”

Rika asked with her mouth full of fried egg and roe, in a way that seemed like she saw through me.

“What was that?” is what I didn’t say, instead keeping silent.

After gulping down the rest of her food, Rika went on,

“You already know don’t you? That which differs between Yozora-senpai and Sena-senpai and Kodaka.”

“.....”

“It’s l-o-o-k-s.”

I stuffed the fried chicken in my mouth in silence. As expected of me, it’s delicious.

“.....Allow me to speak from a friend’s perspective. A boy who is excellent not only at 2 / 15

cooking but also at housework, not to mention caring, as well as having a good attendance record and a serious attitude in class, plus his academic and athletic abilities are nothing to laugh at either, Hasegawa Kodaka is a 17 year-old guy whose hobby happens to be reading, so leaving aside his boyish charm, I can assure you that the

reason such a guy is actively avoided by others is not because of his personality. I'd really like to do something about his sense of humor but WHO'S BOOBS ARE YOU CALLING LUMPS OF LEAN MEAT EH?! YOU

GOT A DEATH WISH.....?! Oh, sorry, it seems we stranded a bit off topic."

.....'Leaving aside his boyish charm'. I felt a sting somewhere in my chest after hearing that but I decided to let it slide.

"That hair and expression..... especially the hair. Putting aside how it might be okay in a more free school, but to have such a hairstyle in this missionary school— which used to be an all-girls school on top of that— it is definitely fatal. If you looked like some cool actor you could have become the cool blonde of the school but it's because that isn't the case that you feel troubled now, right?"

"No, I don't think I don't look too similar to Seo-ku——"

"Don't get too ahead of yourself kid! You think someone like you looks like that cool former Inago Rider member?! Ridiculous!"

Rika averted her eyes with a "kuu....." *Sounds like she's a fan of Seo-kun. So it's not just mecha anime but also Tokusatsu movies that she's into.*

"I-It's just a joke..... don't get so upset. The fact that I don't look cool is all toooo well-known to me..... But I still feel I want them to not just look at my outward appearance but also at my true inner self....."

"I fully understand your feelings, but if you're talking about your inner self then you can only expect people who think they'll find something really interesting there. What's inside is definitely important but what gets prioritized is the package it's in. If I were to use the example of a light novel, let's say there is one which you really liked and you immediately thought, "I really want to read more stuff like this." You then happen to see another book by the same author with a similar theme, yet that turned out to be only a similar cover by an author of a similar name with a completely different style and content."

"Kinda how [BunGe-bu] is not like [Oregairu] or [OreJigoku] even though they might appear to be similar?"

“Yup.”

Care about the package before the contents, eh.....? I didn't want to admit it but there was a way around it.

Even I would often look at the covers of light novels while trying to find something that clicks, not to mention I don't remember many of the names of the authors. It was only when I wanted to buy a new release on 'Amazoness' that I looked up the author's name, it also happens that I'd think “Isn't this the author of the book I read before?”

“.....Even when it's a manga or light novel adaptation, in the end they all seem to have a tendency to be similar to the source material's design one way or another, don't they.....?”

3 / 15

“That's, well, it's simply an indicator that can be used to measure how much respect a reproduction has for the visuals of the source material, as a rule though you really can't say that it's true nature has any relation to it.”

Rika-san calmly pointed that out.

“That's why rather than forcing the remnants of it into cosplay events or the like, it would be preferable to just drop those reproductions, I mean that kind of media has a unique charm to it that some choose to pursue, but..... er, what were we talking about again?”

“I was biting at an analogy when I get side-tracked and started going off about some useless argument that seems to be going on on the internet.....um, basically, I think we were talking about that if you really must get popular no matter what, then you really don't have any other choice than to do something about your appearance.”

“I see..... But really..... I feel like changing my appearance is kinda like deceiving everyone.....”

“.....Even though Kodaka judges women simply by the size of their breasts.”

“N-Not just their breasts okay! Breasts are just one of the factors.”

“Okay then, what’s the most important thing?”

“Ass..... maybe.....”

“Ass, maybe’..... Yeah right, you dumbass.....”

Moving on from this frivolity——

I’d been selfishly complaining this entire time, so I decided to tell Rika what I had told Sena a while back.

That I, who for the most part looks Japanese, got my hair from my English mother and that it was the only redeeming characteristic I really have from her.

So I felt that by rejecting the one characteristic I got from her was like cutting off my relationship with my late mother, so I always believed it was something that I should never do.

After hearing what I had to say, Rika smiled meekly and said,

“.....Honestly, I don’t know how much you can believe in Rika, who in addition to both her parents being in good health is also on bad terms with them, but..... If what you’re saying is that even if it gives you an unpleasant time you want to treasure the connection you had with your late mother, then I think that’s fine in of itself. I think it’s a splendid belief that no one should be able to take away from you. It is something worthy of respect I would say. But you know.....”

Rika suddenly narrowed her eyes.

“If you want to be treated like Yozora-senpai and Sena-senpai after they changed, then that 4 / 15

dignity of yours of not wanting to change yourself is a bit..... quite frankly, I feel like you’re asking for too much.”

The corners of Rika’s mouth raised up to make a cynical smile; I couldn’t think of a response.

‘If you want to be liked by others, then the only thing you can do is change yourself.’

There is only a handful of people who like the real me just as I am, so that makes the Neighbors Club even more special to me.

“For Rika, I think that Kodaka is perfectly fine the way he is right now. I’m positive about the real Kodaka. We should continue to enjoy these fun lukewarm-like days as friends. Don’t you think that’s fine? Rika, at least, doesn’t think she wants something like Kodaka to change right now.”

“.....I’m having fun too.”

A faint smile leaked out.

“.....But it’s unpleasant to be misunderstood. I try to behave honestly, even trying my hardest to help out the student council, but not being rewarded is kind of painful. But you know..... when I complained that ‘nobody understands me at all,’ the comforting words you said made me feel quite good on the inside. Although only a handful of people see me for who I actually am, it should be sufficient to satisfy me..... probably.”

Rika listened to my monologue with an expression of kindness on her face that seemed to wrap everything up.

The Neighbors Club—— That place where we can say ‘you are fine just the way you are’

certainly made me feel good, so in exchange I wanted to protect it. That fact still hadn’t changed.

“.....But you know..... those guys that have accepted me, they’re moving on..... You’ve been the one that has worked the hardest since joining the Neighbors Club, on top of that there’s Maria, Kobato, Yukimura, Yozora and..... before I realized it..... even Sena’s changed.”

Rika smiled kindly.

“That’s fine then, isn’t it? Everyone who’s human grows up sometime, so that’s no reason for you to want to hate yourself. I’m sure everyone isn’t going to just leave Kodaka behind.

On the contrary, I think they’ll be more warm and friendly to you than they’ve ever been.

Those slightly deplorable parts of Kodaka, the members of the Neighbors Club will pardon them, okay?”

Pardon? ——Ah, I understand now.

I finally found the words to express the uneasiness I had been feeling.

5 / 15

“.....If things stay like they are, *I won't forgive myself.*”

It goes without saying that the members of the Neighbors Club were all fascinating.

That fact that that fascinating group of people have continued to like me and accept me is a miracle.

However, in spite of me accepting that it is a miracle, I do not think that the current me is an acceptable person.

Frankly speaking—— I've oft wondered, 'How have I been able to have such amazing times with people of that degree?'.

I won't go as far as to say that I haven't tried. But the truth is anything I've done has had no effect so far. Just using 'I'm giving it my best' as a way to compromise all the time, I'll never be able to actually change my current condition that way.

And up until now I was happy with that. 'Those guys are deplorable, so isn't it fine for me to be deplorable as well?', I always used that line as a compromise to make myself feel better inside.

But..... Those guys right now, they're no longer deplorable.

Even if just a little, I need to give it my best so that I'm not deplorable anymore.

Mikadzuki Yozora and even Kashiwazaki Sena have managed to change themselves. Among that group, I am the only one who hasn't seriously given it my all, and I cannot forgive myself for that.

“That's dull pride isn't it. The stubbornness of men as they say? Even though you're living an enjoyable life, you choose to let that be a hindrance to you.”

Rika's words stirred me up.

I smiled bitterly. “That may be so,” I said, affirming my reasoning.

“But something like a man with no stubbornness, it wouldn’t even be worthwhile to call him deplorable..... that’s just some lame guy.”

I denied my emotions at the same time.

“.....Kodaka, do you want to change?”

To Rika’s question, which felt more like ‘Is that your final answer?’ I responded—

“I want to change.”

6 / 15

Reflecting upon myself a bit, I gave my answer.

In order to puff my chest out with pride and stand side by side with Yozora, Sena, Rika, Yukimura, Kobato, and Maria, whom have grown so much.

So that I can become an acceptable person worthy of the goodwill they’ve shown me.

“Hm. Okay. I’ll help out then.”

Seeming to imply ‘we’re friends, so doing something like that is only natural,’ Rika agreed to help me without showing any particular fighting.

☺

With that said, it was the following day, Saturday afternoon.

I met up with Rika and we went to her regular beauty parlor that wasn’t too far from the academy.

It was a shop that had such a stylish appearance that could lead you to mistake it for some kind of café or something and, apparently, when Rika had her gotta-reinvent-myself-anew phase, she had pilgrimaged here, like, every day.

Guess this is where my first hair dye will happen at last.....

"What are you spacing out for? Get in there, chop chop."

Taking my hand while I was frozen still from nervousness in front of the entrance, Rika pulled me into the shop.

With not so much as a trace of another customer in the confined establishment, there was merely one male employee present.

He was far from what I'd pictured as a so-called 'beauty artist'. Nearly two meters tall, muscular— macho. He had a body built like someone from the special forces with a face to suit, his head shaven. You don't see this sorta person too often, so it was hard to guess his age, but I surmised he might be around 40.

"Oh, welcome."

His voice was rough like you'd expect.

"Hello," replied Rika.

He turned towards me, with an all too sharp glint in the eyes.

"Hoo..... This a friend of yours, Rika? Ain't he a cute one."

7 / 15

C-Cu.....?!

It was the first time someone had got that impression from me.

From the point of view of a weathered veteran straight from the battlefield, a delinquent or two must just look like greenhorns.

Actually, wait a sec..... Is this guy really a beauty artist.....?

Rika noticed my anxiousness and gave me a scolding.

"Seriously, you of all people should know that judging people by their appearance is an awful thing to do."

"Y-Yeah..... Of course....."

She certainly had a point. I did understand better than anyone else. After all, I hadn't been able to escape the prejudice that came with my inherited appearance. Once again I realized just how important appearance was.

"Don't worry, Kodaka. Goloh-san's a gay porn actor; you wouldn't be able to guess from his appearance, but his **elegant finger techniques have made dozens of men cum.**"

That was far from reassuring, and in fact it pushed my danger sensor into the red zone.

"Goloh-san, have you prepared *that*?"

"Ye. I gathered a buncha stuff."

Goloh-san bared his sharp eye teeth and expressed a ferocious smile reminiscent of a werewolf.

Huh.....? What's he planning to do.....?!

"Today, we prepared something special just for Kodaka."

"I-I've got some urgent business to tend to!"

"A'ight, let's get started already, Kodaka-kun."

When I tried to make a run for it, Goloh-san took a firm grip of my shoulders and dragged me back. *Wh-What's with this strength?! I can't fight back at all.....!*

He *made me* sit on a chair.

I saw my own reflection in the big mirror in front of me; my teeth were chattering in terror.

"Ain't no need to be so tense, Kodaka-kun. If ya leave it all to Onii-san here, I'm gonna open the door to a whole new world for you.....!"

"I-I don't really need to see a whole new world!"

8 / 15

"You want to change, right, Kodaka?" Rika said with a smirk.

"T-That's true, but——!"

"What's with ya? Ya might feel a bitta pressure and it might seem hard at first, but once yer used to it it'll feel totally natural."

"PRESSURE?! HARD?!"

No matter how I look at it, those aren't words you'd use when dying someone's hair!

"A'ight. Let's try this fella first."

"HIIIIIIIIIIII!"

I was scared stiff as Goloh-san reached down and pulled out—— a wig.

".....Eh? That's....."

Goloh-san put the wig on my head.

I certainly did feel a bit of pressure. **On my head.**

I looked at myself— black-haired— in the mirror. The hair style wasn't really that different from my usual.

"Yep, looks good on you."

Rika said staying behind me, looking into the mirror seemingly enjoying herself.

"Rika, is this....."

When I turned around to ask something, Rika showed a roguish smile.

"It's your link to your mother, that's why you don't want to dye your hair, right? So we're going for a compromise. It'll be enough if you simply wear this wig in school, you see?"

"Rika.....!"

I did not expect Rika to say something so profound; I was on the verge of tears.

Such consideration! If we weren't friends, I would get down on one knee right this second and ask for your hand!

"If all we do is change the color, it'd be like this. But now that we've come this far, I think we should give other hairstyles a try, too. Goloh-san prepared a variety of wigs for you."

"Yeah, let's do it.....!"

Thereafter, they tried a whole bunch of different wigs on me.

Stuff like: long hair, side parting, wolf cut, mash hair, a light mohawk, and other than the 9 / 15

more common hair styles they also tried obvious jokes like: a top knot, bald, regent style, an afro, twintails, and a permed wig. In the end we settled on a wig that resembled my current hairstyle that only differed in color, whereafter I had my hair cut shorter so that it wouldn't stick out from underneath.

By the way, Goloh-san's technique was certainly terrific; only due to some frantic struggling on my end was I able to keep myself from making a sound as his fingers gently fondled my hair.

☺

After finally escaping from the beauty parlor, Rika dragged me into yet another shop.

It was an optician this time.

"This is where Rika bought the glasses she was been wearing before. Though she did make the lenses herself."

"Hee. Going to buy some new glasses?"

"Yep. For Kodaka, though."

"Me?!"

Rika started to explain to the astonished me as if this was the most natural course to take.

"Just getting your hair black doesn't cut it, you know? We have to do something about your face, too. Obviously plastic surgery is out of the question, so we'll have to rely on some glasses just for show."

".....Will wearing glasses alone make that big of a difference?"

"Don't you dare underestimate the power of glasses. In light novels and anime, popularity changes significantly depending if there are glasses or not, even if they give characters other features like a white lab coat or a ponytail. In the end, it's the glasses that are the true defining trait being relied upon! It's magic that can even turn

some delinquent gangbanger with the most atrocious face imaginable into a glib honor student character the instant you equip him with glasses!"

"Haha, you're exaggerating."

I followed up on Rika's joke and laughed.

——In hindsight, however, I *did* underestimate the power of glasses.

10 / 15

Similar to the beauty parlor, Rika and the female clerk (who appeared to be another acquaintance of Rika's) messed around with me, making me try on sunglasses, pince-nez, and a bunch of other spectacles just for the fun of it. We eventually settled on a pair of big-ish, rectangular, black, and reasonably priced glasses that were more serious than stylish.

The somewhat perplexed me with black hair and glasses did look like a diligent, docile, and normal high school student in every department.

"Is that..... me.....?"

My image had gone through such a dramatic twist that it felt very awkward, but it wasn't bad per se.

Like this, I should be able to just read a book in the library with hardly anyone eyeing me like, "What's *that* guy doing here?" In fact, with a persona like this, the library would seem like my second home.

".....Good....."

Rika muttered, as she stared into my face in a daze.

"O-Oh..... I see."

Being stared at like this is embarrassing.

"Good..... Good..... Guhud..... Guhuhuhuhu□(□^o^)"

Rika's nasal breathing grew more and more violent.

"H-Hey, Rika?!"

"This kind-of rugged aura is so excitiiing□(□^o^)! Rika wants to conserve this transient brilliance of not being used to seeing you with glasses□(□^o^)! And then there'd have to be a student council president with long hair wearing a white school uniform or maybe a maths teacher who looks gentle at first but in reality is super sadistic□(□^o^)□..... No, wait! It'd be fine if you were slowly broken by that beautiful student council president or that maths teacher, but this calls for a harder route where the glasses boy who's still confused from just having transferred in from Tokyo gets pounded hard from behind by an uncultivated macho man who manages the local young people association□(□^o^)! I'm going to get Goloh-san, you go buy some lube and wait for us□(□^o^)!"

"I don't want to!"

"Eh..... But without lubricant your virgin asshole will undergo immense trauma when Goloh-san rams his huge mamba in..... You sure you can take that□(□^o^)□.....?"

"Take it.....? OF COURSE NOT, IDIOT! Why are you even talking like it's a given thing I'm gonna take Goloh-san's thing from behind?!"

"So..... you won't.....?"

11 / 15

Rika tilted her head to the side cutely and pleaded with puppy-dog eyes, and for a second I felt myself being swayed by her plea, but.....

"NEVER!!"

I fiercely defended my chastity.



"Well then, we're nearing the end of the image change, aren't we?"

Rika said as we left the optician.

"Is there still something left? Personally, I feel like a neo-me who's already been through a thorough make-over, though."

"That only goes for the outside, right? Now we're going for what you say and do."

"Say and do.....?"

"You have that natural air about you that makes you seem threatening to other people without even trying, don't you?"

"Haa?! Seriously.....?!"

I had no idea.

"See, when narrow your eyes it makes you look like a hungry raptor, and then you start to give off this intimidating, predatory aura—— like what you're doing now."

"Ugh..... I'm not trying to look intimidating, though....."

"And then you come off all scary like this, because you grumble to yourself in that way too deep voice."

I've actually been told quite a few times that I sound scary.....

"It's really hard, isn't it? So first—— let's try starting with your tone."

"Tone?"

"We're going to try to keep in mind to use a polite tone not only in front of upperclassmen and adults but also classmates and underclassmen. And we'll switch to " *boku* " from now on."

" *B-Boku*.....?!"

12 / 15

"Just by following these few courtesies, the impression you make will change greatly, if you ask me. Going by your current appearance, I think that kind of style will fit you just fine."

"You sure.....?!"

"Rephrase that."

"Are you certain?"

Rephrasing that..... No, as I rephrased my sentence, Rika nodded

with a serious expression and said, "That's it."

As I gazed at my own reflection in the store window, I decided to practise a bit.

I readjusted the bridge of my glasses.

"M-My name is Hasegawa Kodaka..... *desu*."

"Pffft—!"

Rika spouted out violently.

"T-This is almost cruel..... Kuku, pfff.....!"

"I-I'm doing this 'cause you told me to, right?!I am doing exactly what you have told me to do, am I not?"

"T-Timeout for a sec..... Huu..... I-It's hard to breathe..... Huuhaa —!"

I looked at Rika disapprovingly as she held her sides in an attempt to contain her laughter.



Later, I strolled through some game- and book shops with Rika to get used to the polite-black-haired-glasses style.

My looks aside, I was having a great deal of trouble using polite speech and my new way of addressing myself. I decided that I would try harder when I talked to people I didn't know at school.

Shortly after, the sun began to set and we decided to call it a day.

"Alright, see you at school then," I said in my usual tone.

"Yep," Rika nodded with a full-fledged smile.

"Actually, this was my first time spending a day off together with a friend."

13 / 15

"Is that so?"

"Yep. It was really fun."

Seeing the satisfaction radiate from her face made me glad, too.

"I see. Then let's do it again sometime. Today was all about me getting a makeover. Next time, we'll find something more normal to do."

"Yep," Rika nodded and—— expressed a hollow smile.

".....Kodaka....."

"Hm?"

"We're going to be friends forever, right?"

".....Y-Yeah. Friends forever."

It took me a few seconds to reply as I processed what Rika had asked.

At the time, I hadn't realized the true meaning behind the pain in my chest.

☺

Nearly an hour had passed since I parted ways with Rika.

I arrived home while still wearing my wig and mock glasses and greeted Kobato.

"I'm home, Kobato-san. I am your onii-chan."

"FUNGYUAAAAAAAAAHHHHHH!! A-AN-CHAN'S

BRAAAAAAAAAAUUUUKKKKKEEEENNNNNNNNNNNNN!!"

"Please calm down. I haven't had a breakdown."

**"I-I-I-INDANASHENAL COOOOOOOOOOLL!
FWATHAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!! FWATHA, SEIB
MEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!!"**

"I told you to calm down, Kobato! It's me!"

.....I was eventually able to calm down the hysterical Kobato before she made an international phone call to our dad in America, but it took far too long.

14 / 15

Translator notes and references

[1] Three other light novels were listed here, and they were [Light Novel Club], [My youth romantic comedy blah blah] and [My Hell] respectively. They were all written in a slightly different way than normal. Google can do the rest.

[2] He usually uses the improper/masculine “ore/俺” to refer to himself, and was told to use the slightly more proper “boku/僕”.

Chapter 6: Orion

The people involved in my everyday life reacted differently to my image change.

Yozora concluded: ".....I guess..... I've caused you several inexcusable hardships, I guess..... I'll do my best, too, so..... don't you give up either!" She got a little teary-eyed. It felt like we had reached the end of a bittersweet and refreshing story.

Sena burst into laughter at first, "That so doesn't suit you!" before abruptly becoming serious and staring at me.

".....Didn't you say at the summer festival that your hair's proof of your bond with your mother so you would never dye it?"

"I didn't dye it," I replied and took off the wig for a sec, however.....

"Wig or hair dye or whatever, the fact you're hiding it doesn't change."

"I guess so..... It's just like you say..... But rather than stick to my belief from back then, I should be able to do more meaningful things now."

"Hmmm.....? Well, I guess it's fine as long as you thought it over seriously."

Sena said, though she didn't seem fully satisfied for whatever reason.

Yukimura spaced out for a while, blankly staring at my face. Then her cheeks blushed without so much as a word..... *This is embarrassing, say something!*

Maria burst into laughter: "AHYAHYAHYAHYA! Onii-chan's turned black! This is so silly; it's Onii-chan, but he's black!"

Kate went "BUHA—!" and grandly spat out the cola she was drinking. Then said with an expression full of kindness, "Please come to the counseling room sometime. If something is troubling you, I'll listen any time....." It made me think for the first time that she really was a sister after all.

Pegasus, who would visit the academy now and then, made an odd face like he was hallucinating and, dazed, muttered my father's name, "Hayato.....?!" After listening to his tale, it seemed that my father had also tried fake glasses at some point in an effort to look more serious, and I was the spitting image of him from back then.

Hinata-san laughed heartily without caring about the details and accepted my new look:

"Ooh, that suits you nicely, Kodaka! Hahaha—!"

Akane-san gaped at first, but then reacted in a way truly befitting someone who represented the entire student body, namely: "I knew that blond was your real hair color so I didn't mind, but this way it's easier to release you into a normal school life."

On the other hand, Aoi had liked my blond hair and said with a displeased expression,

"Muu. It was so cool, such a waste! Why would you turn it into something so plain?!" I couldn't help but worry about the next student council president's taste.

1 / 20

Karin didn't so much as raise an eyebrow when she met me after my first image change, but instead she started rambling on about the interesting and not so interesting points of the board game she had been playing on Sunday— even though I never asked. When I finally asked her what she thought about my new look, because I couldn't stand how she was acting like everything was normal, she made a bewildered face and asked, "Eh? Did you change something?"

"C-C'mon, something *is* different, right?" I tampered with my bangs for show.

"Aah..... You cut your bangs, didn't you? That's not so strange, though."

"Well, I did trim them a bit! B-But there's more, right?!"

I brushed up my fake black hair and tugged on my glasses too.

"You switched out your glasses, right? If you ask me, I'd say the former ones suited you better, I suppose."

"I didn't switch! This is the first time I've ever worn any! Stop replying so half-assedly!"

"..... I was joking, all right? I don't care about your appearance or haircut, so I ignored it."

".....I see."

I had reacted in a similar teasing fashion when Rika had gone through her image change crisis, but being on the receiving end really hurts.....

In any case, that's how the people who knew me reacted.

Next was the reactions of the most crucial demographic: the students whom I normally wasn't involved with and also mistook me for a delinquent——

My classmates from 2nd-year class-5 were completely bewildered, but only at first.

On Monday morning, I merely sat down on my seat and knew fully well that there were rumors flying about in regards to my sudden change. However, after morning classes ended, the bewilderment was already dying down..... It seemed my fellow classmates were getting used to offbeat things happening with me.

The students who belonged to clubs and committees that I had regular contact with as helper of the student council accepted my new look, as they probably didn't know what I had looked like before.

"Heeey, take this into the P.E. storage room, too!"

"Ah, right away!"

.....Maybe they thought I was a new general affairs guy from the student council, but they happily relied on me for work, too. Compared to cautious way they treated me when my hair was blond, this was a welcome change. Black hair and glasses are amazing!

2 / 20

Even among the students who knew what I looked like formerly or remembered my bad reputation as 'Hasegawa Kodaka the

Delinquent', a bunch of them had started to loosen up after seeing me get along just fine with other students.

If it continued like this, it wouldn't be problematic to establish myself as 'Black-haired, glasses-wearing, serious neo-Hasegawa Kodaka'.

With all this going on, it was only three days left until Christmas Eve.

After school, I entered the student council room, as always, in order to help out said student council.

Presently, it was pretty cramped with all the cardboard boxes that had been dumped inside.

They mainly contained the Christmas tree and decorations for the student council organized Christmas party. As the gymnasium was still being used for classes and club activities, everything had to be kept aside in the storehouse or the student council room.

In the innermost part of that cramped student council room were the two sisters: Mikadzuki Yozora and Hidaka Hinata, sitting across from each other and studying, plus Yusa Aoi, doing work.

".....Oi, Moron. That calculation is wrong."

"Mu?Umm..... Y-Yeah, th-this one, right?! I-I was just thinking that this one might be wrong! Hahaha!"

Laughing it off, Hinata-san reached for the eraser, but Yozora continued to gaze at her coldly.

".....No. The wrong one is the second question on the right-hand page."

"Wha—?! Y-You were definitely looking over here.....!"

"That was a feint, idiot."

"Th-That's not fair, Yozora!"

".....Are you intending to scan for intel with that shrimp-like eyesight of yours during the real deal, too? If you've got the leisure to come up with such clever tricks, then try to at least get on the

same level as an arthropod..... If you can."

.....Even while supervising Hinata-san strictly like this, Yozora was managing her own work at the same time. She operated a calculator with her left hand while writing small numbers on the printout in front of her.

"Excuse me, Mikadzuki-san—! I'm done drafting the schedule table for the ski course, could you please check it!"

3 / 20

Aoi presented a printout to Yozora and she stared at it sternly for a bit.

"...The first and third day's itinerary is all right. But I'm getting the feeling that on the second day, between dinner and lights-out, the times might be off. Please check it."

"Aah.....! I-I of all people!"

"I've thoroughly checked whether there are any other mistakes. Also..... it's quite hard to read, isn't it? Increase the spacing between characters a bit more and try making the font bigger."

"Yes, ma'am—! Right away, ma'am—!"

Aoi gazed at Yozora, who was managing the student council business just perfectly, with her eyes sparkling in admiration. She was totally attached to her.

"Ah, one more thing, Prez!"

"Hm?" Hinata raised her head and looked at Aoi, but.....

"Ah, not Prez, Mikadzuki-san."

"(´ω`)" ← Hinata-san.

To think that Aoi would so naturally treat Yozora as the president instead of Hinata-san.....

"What is it?"

"Actually, to be honest, we've received a request to let Hinata-san train with the Girls'

Basketball Club today....."

Due to the policy of the real student council president, Hinata-san, there were many requests for help coming in to the student council from various committees and clubs.

"Ooh, now that you mention it! There you have it, Yozora, I've got business to——"

SMACK—!

Yozora hit Hinata-san's face with a fly swatter she had produced out of nowhere.

"Ouch—! Yozora, you blew out a formula I struggled to memorize just now! If you let me play basketball, I think I might just recall it!"

"If that's all it took to knock it out of you, then you didn't memorize it: it was simply rattling around your head. So that it won't get blown out next time, I'm gonna carve it into you, cell by cell. You will not breathe until formulas come out of your nose..... Yusa, didn't I say to cancel those club activity requests for now?"

"That's true, but..... the Basketball Club happens to have a practice match with another school on Friday and they won't be able to use the gym again before the Christmas party....."

4 / 20

"Hm..... Sounds problematic....."

Yozora, clearly annoyed, glared at Hinata-san, whose eyes were sparkling with anticipation in contrast.

".....Actually, why would they need Moron here for practice?"

"Our Basketball Club has some strong members in it, but they weren't blessed with many new recruits this year and now that the third-years have retired, there are merely nine members left. To practise under match conditions they need another person and, until now, Hinata-san did just that."

".....The Basketball Club's third-years had the sense to retire and devote themselves to studying, and yet this piece of trash is planning to fool around?"

"I-I'm not fooling around! It's only natural for the student council

president to help out students in need!"

Hinata-san hurriedly explained to Yozora, who was eyeing her scornfully.

"There you have it, Yozora-sensei..... I want..... to play basketball....."

"Choose one: give it up or end your life."

Yozora's curt words left Hinata-san crestfallen.

"So then, Mikadzuki-san: should I cancel this request?" Aoi asked.

"Let's see..... It should be fine if someone substitutes, but——"

A look of surprise came across Yozora's face as she spoke, but it was quickly replaced with a sullen expression.

I probably had the same idea as her.

We knew of one person with sports prowess to rival Hinata-san, and she certainly had lots of free time on her hands.

".....Not happening, huh?"

"No, wait."

I said to stop Yozora, who was throwing her head around as if she was trying to shake out the thought she just had.

For someone who was trying to gain popularity among the female students, helping out the Basketball Club was just the opportunity she needed.

"Won't you let me try at least, Yozora? She's changing, too."

I said, looking directly into her eyes. Yozora snorted, evidently ill-humored—

5 / 20

".....Do what you want."

And so I headed towards the gym with Hinata-san's substitute——
Kashiwazaki Sena.

Sena had changed into her P.E. uniform.

To help explain the situation, Aoi tagged along as well; she was also in her P.E. uniform.

By the way, when I phoned to ask her about helping out, it seemed like she had been in the clubroom playing games as usual and her first reaction was rather unfavorable.

[Haa.....? Basketball.....?]

"Yeah. Can you do it?"

[Hmm, I only did some ball game tournament in the second year of middle school, so I hardly remember the rules.....]

"You should be able to remember the rules soon enough, right?"

[.....That's true. Okay, I can do it.]

It was just like Sena that "I remember the rules" equalled "I can do it."

"I see, then come over, please."

[Jeez..... You want to see me play basketball that badly?]

"Yeah, I really do."

[.....Th—!C-Can't be helped then, I guess..... I'll come over right away, so wait for me.]

A few minutes later we were at the gym.

Aoi gave the explanation, "Today, you'll have to compromise with Kashiwazaki Sena for training instead of the president." The reaction of the Basketball Club members differed considerably between the first- and second-years.

The first-years had innocent worries such as "I wonder if she can really substitute Prez?"

while the second-year members who seemed to know Sena had rather negative reactions like "Why Kashiwazaki Sena?" and " *Why*

Kashiwazaki Sena?"

"L..... Let's get along, okay?"

6 / 20

Sena greeted them with a forced smile.

It felt a bit awkward, but it counterbalanced with her default, overwhelming swagger.....

When faced with this kind of smile, male students would fall for her right away.

The basketball members returned the greeting uncomfortably as well. Sena and Aoi grouped up for warm-up exercises, and practice started.

It was preparation for a match against another school, so practice consisted of a real five-on-five match.

The teams were divided like so: the five star members in the red bibs, and the remaining four members plus Sena in the white bibs.

And so.....

"Ooh! Kashiwazaki-san really is playing basketball!"

"Seriously?!"

I heard the voices of several boys.

When I looked, dozens of male students had gathered at the gym's entrance to peek in here—— More precisely, to peek at Sena doing her stretches on the basketball court.

"Ahh, Sena-sama's P.E. figure..... so divine....."

"Sena-sama—! Please do your best—!"

Sena herself appeared to take no notice of the onlookers, but the basketball members seemed to feel uncomfortable.

"L-Let's not worry about that! All right, we're starting—!"

Aoi called out, standing in the middle of the court holding the ball.

The jumpers were team red's tallest member and team white's Sena; their height difference was about 10cm.

Aoi threw the ball straight-up in the air and both player's hands chased after it.

The one who seized the jump ball was—— Sena.

Overcoming the difference in height like it was nothing, she managed to rake the ball back to her side with a carefree and powerful leap.

Her bust jiggled greatly when she jumped..... And, mainly for that reason, the boys cheered loudly.

Sena received a pass from the white team player that had picked up the ball and began dribbling down the court.

Only a fool would dare to try and break through the star team's defense head on..... or so 7 / 20

they thought, but she had overtaken two of them in an instant and in front of the third member of their three-player-defense, she made a beautiful jump shot.

I even forgot to follow the ball, as I was transfixed by Sena with her blonde hair floating in the air; it was as if she was clad in glittering particles.

The refreshing sound of a ball passing through the hoop echoed and with a moment's delay, the cheers exploded from the gallery.

""""WHOAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA! SENA-SAMA———!!""""

Excited male students began filing into gym, clearly unsatisfied to watch at a distance any longer and swarmed around the court..... They even bunched up around me. It would never have happened if I still had my blond hair.

On the other hand, Sena, who had successfully made the shot, didn't care in the least for the guys' excitement and instead locked eyes with me and smiled proudly.

I felt my face burning up and turned over the scoreboard on the white team's side by two points.

"Should I help with the score?"

A male student I didn't know offered as he drew closer.

"Y-Yeah. Please do."

I stuttered a bit, but was able to give a more or less normal reply nonetheless.

"Okay," he said sociably and stood ready beside the red team's scoreboard.

☺

St. Chronica Academy Girls' Basketball Club currently has nine members: six second-years and three first-years, with their star players being five of the second-years.

According to Aoi, although they were lacking in members, the club's core team was still rated as one of the top eight teams within the prefecture.

Their practice match this weekend was against another school's club of equal skill and it seemed to be an annual event between the two rival schools.

Even if it was only a practice match, it was still their first game in the new system since the retirement of the third-years, so it would be important in determining how the team was progressing.

The student who was helping me keep score, Matsuyama-kun (2nd-year class-4, Judo Club, 8 / 20

rather short, baby face, friendly impression), let me in on the Basketball Club's details and explained this and that, so I learned a thing or two about each of the members.

The captain and point guard - Shinbashi Mika.

She was normally an easy-going girl, but once she stepped foot onto the court she became a different person - barking strict commands as their team leader. The others had deep trust in her judgement.

Shooting guard - Shiroyanagi Hiori.

She had a small build which caused her being mistaken for an elementary schooler now and then, but she had a stern personality

and was feared by the first-years. She was weak with long shots, but her dribbling technique was top-notch and her strongest weapon was a lay-up after a quick drive.

Small forward - Amachi Gaia.

The all-purpose weapon who could do just about everything, and was especially recognized for her accurate middle range shots. Contrary to her name, she was a plain, glasses-wearing girl.

Power forward - Mizuki Reine.

Originally in the Judo Club from middle school up until her first year of highschool, she was often relied upon as a stand-in by her friend, Shinbashi. The constant filling-in served as an impetus to open her eyes to basketball, and so she transferred clubs in her second year. Her physique complimented her powerful playstyle. She was a good vice-captain with a strong tendency to act like a caring big sister.

Center - Saitou Nanaka.

Their tallest weapon at a staggering 175cm. Due to her small features, she seemed weak at first, but she had plenty of natural strength and she was skilled at sharp and accurate passes. She was just your average player in her first year - other than her height - but she had grown to be an excellent center through strenuous muscle workouts and practising more than anyone else. Her favorite foods were Japanese persimmons and pears, her favorite animal was bears, she had two younger brothers, she liked zoos and aquariums, she was terrified of ghost stories—— It was easy to comprehend that Matsuyama-kun liked her.

Together they made a decent, well-balanced team - putting aside their weakness at making long-range shots.

Their individual skill was considerable and their offense as well as defense coordination was good: after good moves they praised one another; after bad moves they encouraged one another; their whole team spirit was commendable.

And Kashiwazaki Sena was giving this team a thrashing.

By abruptly snatching the first points of the match, Sena had snapped them out of their casual attitude and it quickly evolved into a serious game. Starting with Shiroyanagi's fast break down the court to score some points of their own, the red team started to show their dominance in the match. It seemed that Sena was telling the truth when she said "I vaguely remember the rules" as she violated on travelling, double dribbling and the 5-second rule once each. However, as more time passed, the white team began to overwhelm the red team again.

There was one simple reason: Sena's ball playing became better.

At first, Shiroyanagi had been able to easily bypass Sena with her dribbling, but Sena was soon able to counter her.

She intercepted Shinbashi's passes, blocked Amachi's shots, blitzed past Mizuki, and outpushed Saitou.

The red team increased the players marking Sena from one to two, then from two to three.

They tried fighting Sena by changing their tactics flexibly, such as emphasizing their own center, Saitou, and concentrating on long passes in attack.

The red team didn't mess up the tactics themselves; every time a new play was called, they executed it flawlessly. They were able to constantly change their plan x-times over, and that wasn't just something you could learn easily; it was clear how much time they had put into practice. However, Sena dealt with it almost immediately— outdoing the Basketball Club's amassed endeavors.

As I watched the match, I recalled the day I taught Sena how to swim.

Sena had never swum before that day and - even with my not-so-fantastic coaching - she had learned to swim in a flash and after only a mere two hours she was able to keep up with me.

This match was like the swimming pool all over again

But even so..... Her opponents were the star players of the Basketball Club— as long as those girls demonstrated their true strength, they should be able to easily stand up to her.

However, the gallery continued to fill up and everyone was

barracking for Sena as the red team's supremacy whittled away. I heard cruel remarks like "The Basketball Club's not that big a deal, huh?" here and there. Even Matsuyama-kun - who liked Saitou - was charmed by Sena's performance and started cheering for her. Because of that vicious circle, the red team got worse as the game went on and the gap in points grew wider and wider.

Meanwhile, Sena had started to make more errors during her rushed dribbling and shooting after they entered the second half.

I thought that even she would have to get tired eventually, and when she happened to get close to me, I asked, "Are you okay?"

"Mhmm..... I think I'll get the hang of it in a bit....."

Sena said while tilting her head.

10 / 20

"Hang'?"

"Yeah. I want to try that."

"That'?"

"I think it's called a dunk shot? That cool thing where you hold it in your hand and then kinda THUNK it in. With a big enough run-up, I think I can do it....."

"Wha.....?!"

Far from being tired—— it appeared she had the leisure to try some showboating antics.

Unfortunately, her announcement had found the red team's ears as well.

Realizing that they had been reduced to nothing more than mere obstacles, their fighting spirit was all but extinguished.

".....Haha..... What is this.....?"

Their captain, Shinbashi, laughed dryly and fell to her knees.

The other members stood stock still, looks of hopelessness on their faces.

"Um..... A-Are you all right?"

Referee Aoi nervously asked Shinbashi.

"Of course we're not all right....."

Her frail response caused the other members of team red to murmur in despair:

".....This is..... just impossible....." "Everything we've done so far....." ".....Ain't this meanin' we're like nothin'.....?"

"U-Um, d-don't worry about it.....!" "Th-That's right! The game's not over....." The first-year members on the white team tried to cheer them up as well.

"What are ya talkin' about.....? Us, bein' rounded up by some newbie who didn't even know the rules?! That's just..... You can't even call this a game!"

Shiroyanagi was almost screaming now.

Of course Sena had also realized that the mood was taking a turn for the worse.

"U-Um....."

Sena struggled with what to do.

She feigned a kind attitude as best she could.

"Uuum, look..... Don't beat yourself up too much. I'm just that much of a genius."

11 / 20

.....Exactly because her tone was so kind, her haughtiness was all the more prominent.

"Umm..... Aren't you facing a rival school in a practice match next? Something like that?

..... I can help out then if you want? If *I'm* there, you'll *definitely* win——"

Certainly, if the Basketball Club of the other school they were going to have a match with was like ours, they were headed for certain

victory if Sena played..... It would most likely be the same as what was happening now. It was the unmistakable truth.

Sena probably had had no ill intentions; she had said it out of pure goodwill.

She expressed her honest opinion because she wished the best for the battered girls.

It was the same as when she had made Rika really mad..... Though her intent was to worry about the other person, she was unaware that her words were cruelty equal to "You lot will *never* beat me"——

"C..... CUT IT OUT ALREADY—!!"

The one who raised her voice angrily in place of the dejected basketball members was Yusa Aoi.

She was probably seeing herself among the trampled-down Basketball Club figures, as she was also suffering from always being ignored during class.

With teary eyes she glared at Sena, who could only return a bewildered "Wh-What did I do.....?"

"Kashiwazaki Sena—! You always, *always* crush people like this without giving a damn.....!"

" *Huh*.....?"

Aoi laid her earnest indignation bare and Sena merely frowned, the irritated look on her face showing she had no idea what this girl was talking about whatsoever.

"Why don't you take a look for yourself—?! Why don't you realize —?! Everyone around you is human being, why don't you get it—?!"

"Why are you suddenly getting up me and spewing all that incomprehensible garbage?

.....Anyway, this doesn't concern you."

"It *does* concern——"

Aoi cut herself off.

".....That's right. To you, everyone else are just like stones, aren't they.....?"

".....What are you trying to say?"

Giving up, Aoi smiled weakly. Sena's irritation grew.

This is bad!

12 / 20

Knowing I had to step in before the situation could take a turn for the worse, I tried to get onto the court, when——

".....What's all this ruckus about?"

An icy voice blew into the court from outside.

Its owner: Mikadzuki Yozora.

"Yozora?!"

Sena whipped around, looking from Aoi to Yozora, seeming quite taken aback.

".....I was starting to get anxious and thought I'd better come around for a checkup, and it's trouble alright. You really are incompetent, Meat."

"I-I didn't do anything!"

"Yusa. Explain what ha——" She began to ask, but then said, "..... Never mind, I get the gist."

Yozora sighed after having a look around the court.

"Yusa, come here for a sec."

"Yes?"

Yozora headed towards the P.E. prep room and Aoi followed her like a puppy, wearing a puzzled expression.

The two of them went in there.

"Hawawa?! S-So suddenly! Y-You mustn't, Mikadzuki-san! My

heart's not ready yet!

HYAWA—! S-Stop, please! I-If you have to do it, please be gentle at least! N-NYOOOOOOOOOOOO!"

A short while later, after Aoi's screams had subsided, Yozora and Aoi reappeared in the gym.

But Yozora was now wearing the P.E. uniform. It looked a bit tight due to the size.

Aoi hurried after Yozora, dressed in Yozora's skirt and blouse. The tie was undone and only one button was fastened, so you could catch glimpses of her body.

Yozora entered the court in Yusa's P.E. clothes.

"What are you scheming?" Sena asked.

13 / 20

"I'm substituting..... Switch with me."

Yozora said to the still sitting Shinbashi.

Confused, Shinbashi stood up and handed her red bib to Yozora.

Slipping it on, Yozora faced Sena again and declared in a cold, indifferent voice:

"I'll show this rampaging beast how human beings fight!"

The challenged Sena had a ferocious grin on her face.

"This will be interesting..... I'll utterly crush you."

The impact from those words had all of the red team shivering, except Yozora, who didn't so much as twitch: she merely snorted with her usual displeased expression.



After Yozora had some kind of discussion with the members of team red, the match resumed.

Their meeting took a bit less than a minute, and no one would think

they could have developed an effective strategy to face Sena in that short amount of time.

What are you up to, Yozora.....?

While pondering that question, I paid close attention to match for the time being.

The game started with a throw-in by the white team, and soon enough they passed the ball over to Sena.

Sena started her usual dribbling and rushed straight forward.

Facing her from the red team was—— Yozora alone.

Sena had proven to be unstoppable even when marked by three basketball Club members, so it would be inconceivable to think that she could be beaten one-on-one, however.....

"Isn't this perfect?!"

Sena charged gleefully at Yozora, apparently happy from the bottom of her heart.

Yozora stood right in front of where Sena was headed and started her counter-attack.

Sena stepped in to force her way past Yozora, so Yozora extended her hand to try and snatch the ball away, the pair of them had gotten so close it was hard to tell if they had 14 / 20

made contact or not.

THUMP—— echoed around the court and Yozora fell down in spectacular fashion.

"KUHA—!" Yozora shrieked and, "Heh?!" went Sena, flabbergasted.

A moment later, Aoi blew the whistle in a hurry.

"Ch-Charging! White number 2!"

"Hah?! I barely grazed her!"

Sena protested the foul.

".....Jeez, that's why wild beasts are such a handful."

Yozora said, standing up. Her tone was emphasizing indifference, but she was wincing a bit from the pain.

"You.....!"

Sena scowled, but obediently accepted the referee's decision.

Now team red was on the offensive.

Mizuki took the throw-in and passed the ball to Yozora. Yozora advanced with a slow dribble.

Her dribbling wasn't unskilled, but Sena's and the Basketball Club member's techniques had seemed a lot more intimidating.

"I'll do it by myself!"

Sena announced to her teammates arbitrarily and marked up Yozora.

It would be impossible for Yozora to bypass Sena with her technique, so would have no choice but to pass it to someone—— so you'd think, but instead Yozora ran toward Sena.

When Sena extended her hand to try and steal the ball, Yozora suddenly changed her direction and—— fell violently again. *Sena pushed Yozora..... I guess? I didn't see it very clearly, though.....*

"Pushing! White number 2!"

In any case, the referee charged Sena with another foul.

"W-Wait a second! Why are you falling over with that bit of contact?!"

"Hmph, it's because you're so stupidly strong."

Yozora trivially brushed the peevish Sena off.

15 / 20

"Come on, referee! Take a closer look! You're not harassing me, are you?!"

"I-I'm not letting any personal feelings affect my refereeing! You fouled just now, no matter how you look at it!Probably.....!"

Aoi rebutted Sena's attack.

Certainly, the judging before Yozora came was fair; even if she was accused of favoring Yozora, I don't think Aoi would do that kind of thing.

"The referee's judgement is absolute. If you're planning to pick any more fights, take care not to cause technical fouls too, okay?"
Yozora taunted.

.....Back when the game started, before Yozora arrived, Sena had committed a foul. After five fouls you're out of the game, so only two more and Sena would be sidelined.

So this is Yozora's plan..... If you can't beat your opponent, take her out.

"So that's how it is..... You..... are as cowardish as ever.....!"

Sena realized what Yozora was planning too and began grinding her teeth in frustration.

Cowardish, huh..... You can certainly call this kinda thing cowardish, but no one would think that the two times Yozora fell were acting: it was obvious that she was in pain when she stood up. If she overdid the act, there was the chance that Yozora herself could receive a technical foul, and even if someone did notice, for an amateur like her to put her body on the line required a strong resolve and would seem too ludicrous.

It was team red's throw-in and Mizuki passed the ball to Amachi.

Sena then intercepted Amachi's pass to Saitou.

"You're always so cheap! I'm going to crush you and your tricks!"

Far from being afraid of committing more fouls and restraining herself, the enraged Sena went on an even more aggressive dribble drive and cut into the enemy lines.

In the blink of the eye she overtook both Saitou and Shiroyanagi, and charged at Yozora who was lying in wait right in her path.



17 / 20

Yozora casually drew closer to Sena, but they made contact once again as she tried to dodge.

An even more savage sound than before echoed as Yozora's body brutally struck the gym floor.

I-Is this really acting.....?!

"Charging, white number 2—— Wait, a-are you all right, Yozora-san?!"

Watching Yozora, staggering as she picked herself up, Aoi flustered.

"Yozora.....!"

"Wai— You....."

Both me and Sena called out anxiously.

Blood was running down Yozora's forehead.

Luckily, it didn't look like there was much blood and it wasn't a serious injury, but the shock was great nonetheless. Taking a closer look, it wasn't just her forehead: she also had a bruised arm and knee from the previous two fouls.

Yozora touched her forehead with her hand and, upon noticing she was bleeding, suddenly returned to her usual sullen expression and went, "Hmph....."

"Y-Yozora..... Are you okay.....?"

Sena asked worriedly, to which Yozora replied, "No problem."

A drop of blood fell to the floor.

"Why..... are you going this far.....?! What's the point to go so far as to hurt yourself for this cowardly act?! Isn't it enough to just fight each other fair and square?!"

Questioned by the almost screaming Sena, Yozora answered with a fierce smile.

"This is my fair and square.....! If you can't win with power, attack with speed! If you can't outdo them with speed either, oppose with technique! If you have no technique, make use of your ingenuity! If you can't make up with ingenuity, break a sweat to fill the gap! If your sweat isn't enough, then with blood! How can you kill a giant if you don't sweat or bleed?!"

With a tone and gestures like she was in some play, Yozora screamed loud enough to be audible even outside the court——
"Ouch....." she grimaced in agony.

18 / 20

"E-Enough already! Hurry up and get to the infirmary, idiot!"

"Th-That's right, Mikadzuki-san!"

When Sena and Aoi said that, Yozora became silent, stripped off her bib and left the court.

"The rest is up to you."

"OKAY!!"

Shinbashi replied powerfully as she accepted the bib from Yozora.

"All right—! We can do it, Mika!" Mizuki said to Shinbashi.
Followed by:

"Mikadzuki-san! We absolutely won't give up!"

Shiroyanagi said, turning to Yozora. Looks of aspiration returned to the other members'

faces, too.

I see..... Was this Yozora's true goal all along?

Winning against Sena was secondary: her real goal had been to rekindle the fighting spirit of the Basketball Club with a sacrificial performance.

Yozora was able to walk without assistance and so left the gym by herself, never looking back.

"To force Kashiwazaki-san into a corner..... Who on Earth was that?"

Matsuyama-kun muttered in a amazement beside me.

"You don't know her?" I replied using polite speech—

"She's the little sister of the student council president and the president of the Neighbors Club: Mikadzuki Yozora-san."

Shinbashi entered the court and the match resumed once again.

The star members of the Basketball Club didn't plan to face Sena like Yozora had and draw fouls on purpose, but instead challenged her with their own playstyle fair and square. Back to playing at their original ability, they were unrecognisable from how they had played before, and they delivered an excellent match, but alas lost in what ended up being a close contest.

Even though they lost in the end, there wasn't a hint of despair left on any of their faces; I was convinced that the practice match had turned out to be a good thing.

Thus, Mikadzuki Yozora's name began to echo within the school: the one who had gallantly 19 / 20

appeared to aid the Basketball Club in their time of need, and taken Kashiwazaki Sena down a level.

Chapter 7: Dark Knight Rising

December 24th—— Christmas Eve had arrived.

It was 5:30 pm, so Sena and I were on our way to the chapel for the Christmas Mass.

The Mass itself had started at five, but as I had been busy with the Christmas party preparations since morning and Sena said she didn't care about anything other than Kobato's performance, we ended up joining halfway through.

As for the other members of the Neighbors Club, Yozora and Yukimura were even now in the middle of the Christmas party preparations.

Rika was repairing the faulty Christmas lights she'd hung in the rikatory, but she didn't want to go to the party anyway as she was bad with crowds.

Christmas break had officially started for the academy, so neither the Mass or Christmas party required us to wear our uniform. We were both wearing our casual clothes.

Sena was wearing a mostly red dress with her shoulders, legs, and thighs exposed; just looking at her was enough to make me shiver.

I was wearing a navy-blue jacket with blue trousers. Sena told me, "You look like you're on a bride hunt."

We were walking side by side. We had done so dozens of times before, and yet it felt really special just because it was Christmas Eve.

"C-Come to think of it, Sena, have you ever been to Mass?"

I brought up the subject in an attempt to gloss over my nervousness.

"Me? I went a few times with Papa and Mama when I was little, but not recently. After all, I'm not a Christian like them."

"The chairman is Christian?"

"Sure is."

That reminds me, Pegasus-san does cross himself before meals.

"Although, if I am to follow in Papa's footsteps and become this academy's next chairwoman, I'll probably have to be baptised....."

Succeed in Pegasus-san's footsteps.....?

".....So, if you got married for argument's sake, would that still be the case?"

"Not necessarily. A son-in-law could become the successor if they so wished, or they could even choose a suitable relative, is what Papa told me before. It will be the same when I get married..... s-so you can relax, okay?"

1 / 23

Sena said, her face turning a shade of red.

Marriage and whatnot aside, at least I knew that Sena would be able to choose her own future, and that was a relief.

My image of Kashiwazaki Pegasus-san as the 'head of a noble family' had been completely shattered..... *Although, I would like to know what kind of past he has had to turn him into the person he is today.*

"Ah, but you're going to become a school teacher. Frankly, if you became a member of the Kashiwazaki household, it'd be super handy when dealing with the local educational circles.

With Papa's recommendation, you could pick whatever school you liked."

Sena teased me with a smile.

"Now listen here, you..... It's foul play to say things like that....."

"Is it? The house I was born into and the authority of my parents are assets that combined with my genius abilities and beautiful features are who I am. Is using all these gifts to appeal to the man I love wrong?"

Sena declared calmly.

While my face grew hot again from the "love" part—— I thought how I really envied Sena's ability to affirm herself without ever

feeling inferior.



As we neared the chapel, we could hear singing from within.

We softly opened the doors to the hall and went inside. About 20 children stood beside the organ on top of the altar and were singing in unison. But neither Kobato nor Maria were among them.

Almost all of the seats were taken, but luckily we were able to find two empty seats in the back, so we sneaked up there and sat down.

The Mass attendees were quite diverse: there were parents and their children, old couples, and student couples who looked like they were from our academy.

The singing came to an end and the choir children stepped down from the altar.

"The play 'The Gift of the Magi' will begin momentarily. We hope you enjoy the show."

When a young sister who looked like the director announced that softly—— it was Takayama Kate—— all the lights except for those above the altar turned off and the parishioners applauded. Sena and I applauded as well.

2 / 23

Another sister began playing the BGM on the organ. Two girls trotted up to the altar with small steps—— Maria and Kobato were taking the stage.

Maria's costume consisted of a men's suit and a biggish homburg hat, which her hair had been stuffed under to make it look short.

Kobato was wearing a blouse and a long skirt with her hair down.

"KOB—— mugagu—?!"

Sena tried to scream out, but my Spidey-senses tingled and I covered her mouth just in time. I couldn't let her scream in a sacred place like this, of course.

"This play is set in the U.S.A. a hundred years ago. A poor married couple is living in a cheap, run-down apartment."

It seemed Kate was narrating.

"The husband's name is Jim——"

The center light went out, Then a spotlight on the right-hand side turned on and Maria walked from the middle into the light.

"The wife's name is Della."

Now the left side was illuminated and Kobato walked from the middle to it.

Once Kobato got there, the light on the right went out and Maria's figure could no longer be seen.

"Gya, gyaa. W-We're all out of money!"

Kobato exclaimed, looking considerably nervous. *Besides, gyaa?*

Kobato had shown some impressive acting in her movie, but ordinary acting in front of so many people seemed like a different kettle of fish.

"Tomorrow's Christmas and yet Della has saved only a mere \$1.80. Each and every day she receives unimpressed looks from the merchants when she tries to barter down the price of meat and vegetables in order to build a secret stash, but this is all it amounted to."

After the narration the light on the left-side vanished and the right-hand side was illuminated instead; Maria's figure appeared again.

"Well, now I'm in a bind! No money at all! Now I can't buy a Christmas present for Della!"

Maria recited her lines smoothly and energetically. She was so energetic that you couldn't tell if she was worried at all. And it wasn't just me who thought so; I could hear chuckling coming from the audience.

".....Jim and Della had exchanged Christmas presents every year. However, this year had been tough due to a depression and there hadn't been room for saving money——"

The story was mainly progressed through Kate's narration with Kobato and Maria's lines kept somewhat minimal.

With no stage props whatsoever and the hall's interior being as always, the changing scenes were expressed by the organ's music and the variation in the lighting.

Jim and Della headed to town separately to buy each other a present.

So that Jim could buy a comb made of tortoiseshell for Della to comb her beautiful hair, he pawned an inherited golden pocket watch from his grandfather's generation.

Della had found an ideal platinum chain from which Jim could hang his treasured golden pocket watch, so she decided to cut her hair and sell it off so that she could buy the chain.

With the exception of the two leading roles, Kate voiced all the characters such as the storekeepers of the pawnshop and wig shop.

When Jim returned home, he discovered Della's short hair—— Kobato had tucked her hair into blouse to represent her hair being cut off—— and was shocked.

"Gyaa! What's with your hair?!"

What's gyaa?!

"I just cut it a bit! More importantly, here! Hmph! A Christmas present!"

Kobato, or rather Della, presented the platinum chain without hesitation.

"What's this for?!"

"Kukuku, you shall attach it to your watch."

"Oooh, thanks!"

"H-Hmph— you fool. I hath not done it for the likes of you..... I bought it for the watch."

"I see. I have a present for you, too!"

Maria, or rather Jim, handed the comb over to Kobato.

"This is the legendary comb that I hath been searching for for ten millennia!"

"Your hair's the only good thing about you, after all. Nothing I can do about that, so I bought it!"

"H.....Hmph—! I can purely praise your intention alone now!"

"I also rendered my present useless, but I'll be thankful for the thought!"

"Kukuku....."

"Ahahaha!"

4 / 23

"Kukuku kukuku....."

"Ahahahahahaha!"

The laughter of the little tsundere couple echoed and the audience laughed too.

"Jim and Della had both parted with their most treasured possession for the sake of the other. However, both of them managed to give the other a wonderful and irreplaceable gift.

Among those in the world who give out presents, people like these two are truly the wisest——"

Kate's narration wrapped up the play and was followed by large round of applause. I clapped from the bottom of my heart, too.

"Those two were just adorable, weren't they?" "Fourth grade elementary students I would guess." The two ladies in the row in front of us said while applauding.*One of them is in her second-year of middle school.*

The play went for 15 minutes at best, but I thought it was a nice story.

Beside me, Sena stopped applauding the second Kobato and Maria came down from the altar and were out of sight.

On the other hand, I kept applauding until I was the last one to stop.

Jim and Della had sacrificed their most precious possessions for the other.

To me as a non-Christian, the term 'wise' they had used wasn't all too familiar, but—— at that moment, I could see that what those two had done for each other was both noble and wonderful.



After the play ended, we snuck out of the chapel and headed to the gym.

The student council organized Christmas party was to start at six.

It felt kind of inexcusable to sneak in halfway through Mass and then to sneak back out soon after, but in reality I was also part of the official Christmas party management staff. I had been appointed before I knew it, all thanks to Yozora.

"That reminds me, you're really going to the Christmas party, huh? I was sure you'd just watch Kobato's play and head home."

I said to Sena.

"I don't really want to go..... You and Yozora seem to have given it your best, so I want to 5 / 23

see how it turned out at least."

"I see. Then I hope you'll enjoy yourself."

We arrived at the gym ten minutes before starting time.

Aoi was acting as the receptionist at the door. It was an event for the academy's students, so it was mandatory to present your ID card before entering the hall.

Wearing an orange party dress, she also had a yellow armband that read 'STAFF' fixed to her arm, indicating that she was part of the management staff.

"Ah! Kodaka-kun!and Kashiwazaki Sena....."

Aoi frowned when her eyes fell upon Sena.

Sena's expression also stiffened, probably because she had recalled what had happened at basketball the other day.

".....Just to be sure, please show me your student IDs. Kodoka-kun, take this."

"Okay."

I accepted the staff armband Aoi handed me.

Sena rummaged through her expensive looking bag and produced her ID. I took a peek inside her bag and noticed a small ribboned parcel.*Is that a Christmas present for Kobato?*

"Here." Sena presented her student ID to Aoi.

".....Pl-ease en-joy your-selves."

While we heaved a small sigh at Aoi's robotic parting words, the two of us entered the gym.

Within the gym, ten-odd elegant Christmas trees were placed here and there, and the windows and walls were decked with wreaths and colorful paper chains. I had helped make and hang those up, too.

A large amount of food like fried chicken, pasta, sandwiches, chao fan, paella, soup, stew, curry, chili shrimps, mapo tofu, chop suey, gyoza, spring rolls and so on were lined up on the long table that was arranged like a white cross. There was a lot of Chinese dishes there because Hinata-san had her own good connections to a Chinese restaurant and had talked them into some catering. Besides that, the academy's cooking club (boasting more than 40

members, it was this academy's most influential club) had been making food since morning.

I had helped with my fried chicken and curry.

The gym was already packed with lots of students and everyone was waiting for the party to start.

I could see some figures in the school uniform here and there, but the majority had dressed up for the occasion. It felt like such an odd thing to see within the academy for some 6 / 23

reason.

"H-Hey, that's....." "Sena-sama.....!" "Sena-sama's here.....!" "S-So beautiful....." "It was totally worth coming just to see her wearing a dress!"

The male students stirred up the second Sena entered the gym.

"Good evening."

When Sena greeted them with a perfect lady smile, the boys cheered, "UOOOOH!"

".....You're super popular as always."

".....Being popular with this riff-raff doesn't make me happy in the slightest."

Sena grumbled in a whisper.

"S-Sena-sama! Please accept this! My Christmas present to you!"

One of the male students drew close and passed Sena a small package.

This served as the starting point.....

"Hey, you! It's not fair if you get a head start!" "Sena-sama, please accept this, too!"

A mob of male students swarmed Sena.

As no one was avoiding me in my black-hair-and-glasses mode plus staff armband, I got pushed aside by the guys.

"Don't be so pushy. I will accept them all, so please line up."

When Sena persuaded them softly, the guys responded with a "YES!" and formed a line as ordered.

.....It looked like it would be impossible to talk to her for a while, so I decided to take my leave.

Then—

"Kodaka."

I turned around to see who had called out; it was Yozora.

She was dressed in a gender neutral black jacket and pants as well as a staff armband.

"Oh, Yozora. Are we starting soon?"

"Yeah." Yozora looked around the hall with a kind of satisfied smile. She had stood-in for Hinata-san and done the Christmas party program, budget compilation, etc., so you could call her the most crucial person in regard to this party's success. Even today she had been busy since morning with the party preparations.

7 / 23

"Thank you for your hard work."

"It's not over yet. Don't lose focus."

"That might be true, but..... is there anything I can do to help?"

"The students will probably rush for the food the second we open it. I'd like you to form them into lines."

Right after I asked, a request came flying back.

"Got it. Then you do your best too, all right?"

As I started to move towards the food to get ready.....

".....Kodaka?"

Yozora called out to me again so I turned back around.

"Did I do it right? Did I pull off the 'cool guy' act?"

As if the perfect superwoman we had witnessed these past two weeks had been an illusion, Yozora looked at me with an anxious appearance reminiscent of a freezing kitten. I gave her a smile in return.

"Yeah, it was perfect. Aren't you on your way to becoming the real student council president?"

I said seriously. Yozora's cheeks blushed a bit. "Don't tease me," she

said, seemingly irritated.

"I'm not teasing, you know? You saw all of the student council president duties through just perfectly."

".....That was all an act. I was just copying someone."

"Act? Copying?"

".....I copied some dependable heroines or leaders that turn up in manga and dramas..... I was the copy of a perfect student council character..... The copy of a cool club prez from sports manga..... The copy of my sister or Meat, before I came to know her true self, as they were in my mind..... Every time someone talks to me, the legs of the real me tremble and collapse, even now....."

Yozora said in frail self-deprecation.

".....Isn't it fine to imitate them? If you keep playing the ideal figure, you'll eventually become the real deal."

8 / 23

".....If so, then that'd be fine....."

Yozora expressed a faint smile in regards to my encouragement.



As I parted from Yozora and went on standby near the curry, the feedback sound of a mic being switched on resounded throughout the gym.

[FUHAHA! DID WE KEEP YOU WAITING?!]

Standing on top on the stage was Hinata-san, wearing a Santa Claus costume and holding the mic as she started the opening greeting.

Yozora was standing right in front of the stage.

[Raydees endo ge..... gentolmen? It's Christmas Eve at last and yet all of you have nothing better to do than come to school, you sorry lot! Not having a lover to spend your time with, you wanna-be nor..... normies? We, the student council, will grandly entertain such people tonight! We have a performance

by the Wind Instrument Club, a live concert from the Light Music Club, a magic show from the Conjuring Club and many, many other events! I hope you enjoy the shows! We've prepared a lot to eat too! No need to hold back! Furthermore, besides our school's Cooking Club, the super famous Chinese restaurant 'Delicious Heaven', located on the main street in front of Tooya station, has helped out with the catering. So if you get the chance sometime, go and grab a meal there! And with that, the Christmas party starts now! MERRY CHRISTMAS!]

""""""""""MERRY CHRISTMAS!!""""""""""

The students cheered all at once and a few set off Christmas crackers.

By the way, the fact that Hinata-san's speech sounded weird here and there was due to the fact she hadn't thought it up herself, but had simply read aloud the large cue cards that Yozora held up. Judging by the content and wording, Yozora had probably written the speech herself. *Normies*.....

I heard that Hinata-san always prepared someone from the student council to hold up cue cards whenever she had to deliver a speech.

At the athletics festival it had been Aoi's turn, and even though it had been cloudy on that day, she had kept saying stuff like, "On this clear autumn day without a cloud in sight." She simply kept reading aloud sentences that didn't match up with the situation..... Hinata-san really was an airhead.

As such, Hinata-san was whisked out of the gym by Yozora the second the opening greeting had finished. It seemed that even during the party they'd be in the student council room 9 / 23

studying. I pitied her a little since she had even gone out of her way to dress up as Santa and all.

As for the other student council members, Aoi was managing the reception outside non-stop, Akane-san was on duty to help the Wind Instrument and Light Music clubs with stage preparations, and Karin was moderating.

Just as Yozora had anticipated, the students instantly swarmed the buffet as soon as the party started.

"Please line up in ordeeer! We have enough for everyyyone!"

I instructed the students.

There was no problem worth mentioning, and they smoothly formed a line.

If my hair had still been blond, I was sure that just my standing there would have meant no one would dare come any closer, let alone line up in an orderly fashion.

While holding a sandwich and so on, I had been on buffet duty for about an hour.

Around the time when the wind instrument concert started, some of the party-goers started to lose interest a bit, but the buffet was still far from losing popularity.

We were about to run out of fried chicken, so I decide to head to the cooking practice room to get some more food we had prepared beforehand.

The popularity of my fried chicken was in fourth place after the shrimp chili, gyoza, and spring rolls. The top three were all cooked by the professional Chinese restaurant, so there was no beating that. Now and then I heard people say, "The fried chicken's good," or "the curry is tasty." It had been a first for me to cook for dozens of people and quite frankly, it was a real hassle, but as it was going to be lined up with cuisine from professionals and the Cooking Club, I had no choice but to go all out. Being rewarded for my troubles made me really happy.

I carried a big plate stuffed full of fried chicken from the cooking practice room located on the third floor of the special classes building.

On the way back I took a detour to the rikatory on the second floor.

Rika was sitting on a chair near the window spacing out. The window was open and you could faintly hear the Wind Instrument Club's performance.

"The Christmas party seems to be going well, doesn't it?"

Noticing me, Rika smiled softly.

"Yeah," I nodded. "Are you really not gonna come? You helped us out today and all..... and you've even gone to the trouble of wearing that."

Rika was wearing a mainly white party dress.

10 / 23

There had been a time when Rika was a fashion maniac, but lately her looks had gotten more casual and it became a rare sight to see her in such showy attire.

In all honesty..... I thought she was stunning.

"Hmm..... Rika's fine with just taking in the mood from here."

"I-I want go with you."

I ran my mouth without thinking.

Rika's eyes widened as if she had been gulled.

"Because we're friends?"

"Y-Yeah..... Because we're friends. I've always wanted to go to a Christmas party with a friend, you see....."

"I guess I don't have a choice then."

Rika had a little chuckle at my words and stood up from her chair.

☺

I entered the gym together with Rika and replenished the fried chicken on the buffet.

The Wind Instrument Club's performance had just ended, so people had gathered around the buffet again.

"Is there something you'd like to try? I'll get it for you."

I said, but Rika shook her head.

"It's fine. I can get it myself."

"You sure? It's crowded"

"I can't change that I'm not good with crowds, but it won't end up like before where I started to feel unwell, I guess."

Certainly, when we went into town for my image change she had seemed to do just fine.

Perhaps Rika had overcome her fear of crowds.

11 / 23

"If that's the case, then do you think you can go to those huge doujinshi festivals by yourself now?"

"Hmmm..... If it's something on that kind of level it's probably still too much, I think.....

Even for someone who isn't terrible with crowds, I've heard it's a tough ride. I wanna go some time, though, so I thought I'd train myself around Nagaya Station first."

"No need to hold back then, you can call on me anytime."

"Of course I'll call on you. That's what friends are for."

Rika said, smiling.

"Well then, Rika will go and get some food."

"Yep. By the way, I made the fried chicken and seafood curry."

"Hee. Rika hasn't had Kodaka's curry since the summer training camp."

"It's even better than back then; look forward to it."

"Fufu, show me your best shot."

Rika headed to the food line, leaving me behind.

Then——

"I already told you I don't know, didn't I?"

A voice reached in my ears, and I could tell it was trying to mask

irritation, although not very well.

The owner—— Kashiwazaki Sena.

When I looked, she was about ten meters away from me and being pressured by four girls.

"Don't play dumb!" one girl screamed.

"You're holding it! I saw Sunagawa-kun give it to you!"

She pointed at the big paper bag Sena was holding.

She had stuffed all the presents she had received from the male students inside the paper bag; it was so full it looked like it was about to burst.

"Which..... one was it?"

Sena made an honestly puzzled face.

12 / 23

"'W-Which', you ask.....?!"

"I'm sorry. There's so many, I can't remember which I've gotten from whom."

"You.....!"

Even though Sena spoken using polite words, three of the girls had furious expressions on their faces and the last remaining girl was on the verge of tears.

"Uuuh.....! So cruel.....! Sunagawa-kun, how could you like such a....."

"Akiko has had a crush on Sunagawa-kun for ages!"

"Even though it's because she thought he was cool at the cultural festival!"

It appeared that one of the girls (Akiko) liked Sunagawa-kun, but Sunagawa-kun had been swooned by Sena and, as many had, gave her a Christmas present today. That had angered the girls.

"Like I said, even if you tell me these things....."

Sena looked as if she was really fed up.

"You're lying! We know you were ogling him!"

Sena's nose was twitching.

".....I did no such thing. To begin with, I don't even know what this so-called 'Sunagawa'

looks like."

"That's mean! Sunagawa-kun is such a gentle and good person....."

"I told you, I don't know....."

Even as an outsider you knew that Sena was considerably annoyed.

"Ah, I know! I'll just give you this."

Seemingly having thought of something good, Sena handed over the paper bag.

"Ha?" responded the bewildered girls. Sena just smiled.

"The present of that Sunagawa guy should be in there, right? So I'll give it to you. I don't know which one it is, so if you want, you can have them all."

Sena didn't have any ill intentions; she probably thought this was a really good method to pacify the girls, but——

"D..... DON'T SCREW WITH ME!!"

BANG—!

13 / 23

Sure enough, all she managed to do was add fuel to the fire.

One of the enraged girls shook the offered paper bag off with great vigor. Though it wasn't just the paper bag; Sena's handbag, too, flew to the ground.

The presents in the paper bag scattered across the floor and so too did the small ribboned parcel that was in her handbag.

"Ah!" Sena yelled.

She picked up the small present, completely ignoring the rest. Then she glared at the girl with eyes clearing showing killing intent.

"W-What now.....? That's probably just another one from those guys, right?!"

Said the girl, faltering. Then it felt like I heard the last string of Sena's patience finally snap.

".....Shut up, you worm."

"Wha—.....?!"

Sena spoke to the speechless girls in a voice that seem to emanate from the the depths of hell itself.

".....Ah, I'm so pissed now..... My patience is so at its limit..... Why do I have to..... Why does perfection incarnate like me have to..... GO OUT OF MY WAY TO BE CONSIDERATE

OF TRASH LIKE YOU?!"

"B-Because..... You're the one who's ogling the boys....."

"And I've told you that I have no idea what you're talking about, just how slow are you, you retarded side-character?! You keep screaming this incomprehensible rubbish at me like an idiot and it's gone too far! You're violating my ears so at least try to learn to talk like a human being before you open your mouth! Do you have shit for brains or what?! How about you walk on all fours until you make the step up to humanity?!"

"Ah....." "Wha—....." "Huh.....?!" "Tha—....."

The slander came at them like surging waves and the four girls looked as if they were ready to cry.

She had been quiet recently, but Sena's vilification was formidable enough to rival Yozora's.

I was shocked that she could produce such cruel words so smoothly and easily, but at the same time I admired her for it.

"It's been irritating me for a long time now..... Why do *I* have to match up?! Why do *I* have to bend my back get down to your

level?! Why does the genius have to match up with the 14 / 23

average slob?! It should be right the other way! I shouldn't lower myself, you all should step it up! Same with basketball: why did I look like the bad guy for being good at it?! Even now I don't agree at all! No matter how you look at it, a bad is a bad! I wasn't trying to break the spirits of the small fries!Ah, enough! Look here you rubbish side-characters who've done nothing but squawk like little birds since forever!The source of all this is that *you* accuse *me* of stealing guys, right?!And you say that *I'm* ogling them?! And you can't get it through your thick skulls that I'm *not* doing it and moreover that I don't *need* to do it?!

Why are you putting it as if it's a bad thing that I'm beautiful, are you retarded?! It's your fault for having no charm at all, you ugly sticks! Of course you'll never match up to me, but you dare resent *me* for your inferiority?! Get out of my way! Get out of my *sight*! You're lowly worms, so you should at least wriggle in the miserable dirt where you're not in anyone's way! I am merciful, so I won't tell you to just die; but as filth you ought to live more submissively as befits filth!"

Sena ranted on, venting all her accumulated anger at once.

I was shocked at all the anger Sena had swallowed up until now.

The source of all her stress was surely me.

Human can't simply change—— therefore it's inevitable others will become stressed—— but that stress had exploded in the worst kind of way.

So the one at fault was..... me?

Sena sighed roughly. Maybe she had gotten tired?

Not just Akiko, but all of the four girls had teary faces now.

.....If this had been a mere quarrel among girls, it would've been Sena's win, probably. It felt like she had said too much, but those girls had been the ones who were stubborn about showering her in false accusations, and, you get what you deserve.

However, there were a lot of other people here besides Sena and those girls.

And the majority of those—— me included—— were those who had been classified from Sena's superwoman viewpoint as 'small fry', 'side-characters', and 'average'.

Strong, straightforward, beautiful—— that was the being named Kashiwazaki Sena. As a single human being she was perfect, but among those who could not survive without others, she was hopelessly alone.

"H-Hey, y-you've gone too far..... I think....."

A female student who had witnessed the argument said hesitantly. The girl had glasses and looked frail, but she had mustered up the tiniest bit of courage.

Starting with that girl's words, the surrounding students started to blame Sena unanimously.

"She really did say too much....." "Way too cruel....." "She didn't have to go so far as to make them cry....." "Hold up, isn't she way too foul mouthed.....?" "Scaaaaary....." "So this 15 / 23

is Kashiwazaki-san's true colors....." "What a horrible personality....." "She's looking down on us, too, right.....?" "Those pitiful guys who gave her presents....." "Actually, shouldn't she apologize.....?" "This is, like, makin' me so sick....."

It wasn't just the girls; even the guys were taking it out on Sena. Some of them had even lined up earlier to give her presents.

Sena's eyes twitched in anger, her expression cramped unnaturally, she grinded her teeth, and just by watching you could understand quite clearly that she was totally livid.

This time, she wasn't just facing-off against the four girls, but everyone present. Right before Sena was about to shoot forth her vilifications again like an erupting volcano.....

"——Does she even have friends?"

Someone fired off that nonchalant suggestion.

The person who had said it probably had no idea of the impact those vague words would have.

However, that was Kashiwazaki Sena's—— the perfect superhuman—— sole and greatest weakness.

Sena's body started to tremble slightly, her face flushed in shame; it signalled an unrest that even an outsider could understand.

"Eh, ah, na, ah, uh....."

The mouth that had spewed all the slander earlier so easily, could now only stutter and stammer and failed to produce anything coherent. The mouth that had produced all the slander earlier so easily, could only move vaguely and not produce any meaningful words.

"E-Eh? Could we have hit..... a bulls-eye?!"

Suddenly there was laughter—— scorn arose.

"Huh? Seriously? No friends?" "Cause she's just so ugly on the inside, right?" "I'm in Kashiwazaki's class and during P.E. she's always pairing up with the teacher, did you know that?" "Ahaha, that's so bloody lame!" "Hee, who's the pitiful one now?"

Looking at the ground and shaking, Sena clenched her fists.

I can't stand by and watch this any longer.....!

"St——"

——op, I tried to call out to help Sena, but.....

16 / 23

"DON'T LAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAUGH———!!"

An angry voice resounded in the gym.

"Don't laugh—! Don't laugh—! Don't laugh—! Don't laugh—! DON'T LAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAUGH!!!"

The crowd parted to reveal a lone girl, apparently the one sticking up for Sena.

Their body clad in a black jacket, looking like a knight arriving to save the princess, the girl's name was—— Mikadzuki Yozora.

"Eh, M-Mikadzuki-san.....?" "Mikadzuki-san....." "Mikadzuki-san?" "Batman?" "What's Mikadzuki-san doing?"

It seemed like Yozora's popularity had risen high enough to be known to everyone by now.

Confusion floated onto the faces of the mob as they realized Mikadzuki Yozora's shouting was directed at them.

Throwing her position as the student council president's substitute to the wayside, as if she didn't even care about the popularity she had acquired, she bursted into a fit of rage for one person, and one person alone—— Kashiwazaki Sena.

"JUST HOW INSOLENT ARE YOU, YOU BASTARDS?!"

With that one sentence, the bewildered crowd understood that Yozora wasn't their ally.

"'I-Insolent'.....?" "What's she trying to say.....?" "Eh, us.....?" "I-Isn't she the bad guy here?!"

They realized Yozora hadn't come to display her leadership skills and put a stop to the turmoil—— she was an 'enemy' that had come to condemn them, not Kashiwazaki Sena.

"Y-Yozora.....?"

Sena stared at Yozora, her eyes wide open in confusion.

Yozora gave Sena a fleeting glance.

".....She certainly is an idiot. She can't help but run rampant with all her strength, is unable to read into a given situation because she is blinded by her narcissism and egoism, and overall is an outrageous idiot who doesn't even realize that Sumeragi seriously despises her. She spouts nonsense like she's some perfect superwoman, but in reality she far from 17 / 23

perfect; she's a lotus root, full of holes to the very core..... It wouldn't be wrong to say she's striving to become human....."

"W-Why you.....!"

Sena's objection was interrupted.

"HOWEVER—!"

Yozora exclaimed sharply.

"It can't be helped that she'd 'throw stones', she's an utter nincompoop—— but the bitchiness of you bastards who're ganging up to throw stones at her is a whole different story! You're shameless pigs who emphasize their own misery! Despicable locusts who swarm to whatever justice is easiest to understand! Don't misunderstand! You bastards aren't righteous! Lowly scum like you, who thoughtlessly attack others to distract yourselves from your own pathetic lives, don't have a shred of righteousness!"

Shaper than Sena's foul abuse, the extremely harsh words transferred the mob's anger from Sena to Yozora.

Why is Yozora so angry?

Why is Yozora going so far for Sena?

While I had those questions on my mind, I vividly recalled the time I had first met Yozora.

I had been surrounded by a whole bunch of classmates and they were bullying me.

And Sora came to my rescue like a hero.

But I'm not the only one Yozora has rescued.

She's rescued Kobato, Hinata-san and—— although she knew it had been a unfavorable choice—— she had stuck with her mother after the divorce.

Yozora couldn't help but extend her hand to anyone suffering in front of her at the times it mattered; the trait of a hero.

She had saved a boy she didn't know: Taka.

She had saved my sister, even though she had no special interest in Kobato.

She had even extended her hand to the neglected sister: Hinata-san.

It was this Mikadzuki Yozora who couldn't help but rush to the aid of her most treasured existence—— far more dear to her than the boy she liked—— her 'friend', when she was in a trouble.

"You peasants who hate what you don't understand, who can't do anything but treat even the desire to change with ill will! You maggots who're just playing innocent and don't do anything to enhance yourselves, who can't do anything but stand in the way of others! I 18 / 23

won't let the likes of you make Kashiwazaki Sena cry!"

I recalled the flying rider knee strikes and punches the bullies had sustained from my ally of justice back then.

Anyhow, this world was harsh to those who made mistakes. Attacking those those who were in the wrong was considered good.

However, Yozora didn't accept beating others as a good thing, just because they had been acknowledged by society as bad people and it was considered okay to do so.

That isn't justice. It was evil to believe attacking and destroying was just.

That's why, surely—— it couldn't be just to save Kashiwazaki Sena who had flagged everyone in here as evil and was herself considered a bad person by everyone else.

She wasn't an ally of justice.

Mikadzuki Yozora was an ally of those with a tough life.

".....Always, always running away, thinking happiness will just fall into your laps all of a sudden.....!"

The tone of Yozora's voice fell as if she was drifting into monologue.

"Always being jealous of others, ignoring reality, not trying to do anything yourself....."

Those were the words Rika had directed at Yozora before.

Yozora's speech was attacking herself, attacking the crowd, and accusing everything else in the world that had accumulated in her.

"The heart and soul that once shivered when seeing a boy with the

courage to risk his life to save others, who shed tears at the letter from a girl whose days were numbered, and the next thing you know, that same person is hating others! She wanted to be strong and just and wonderful, just like the protagonists she identifies with, but instead she hurts others with these hands! With the very mouth that proclaimed the magnificence of love and friendship; scorns others and lies to herself.....! No consideration, no imagination, no growth; beasts so idiotic and cruel that redemption is nigh impossible—— that's what we are!"

Tears flowing, Yozora clenched her fists and shouted with a quivering voice.

"We longed to become heroes or magical girls, wishing to do justice, and despise evil, and demonstrate the virtues of love and friendship! Why can't we..... WHY CAN'T WE BE NICE

TO ONE ANOTHER?!"

To most of the people here who had come to terms with themselves as they had grown 19 / 23

older, this—— was surely a childish question.

They were they. Others were others. They were normal people. On the other side of the screen were special oddballs. What if you took stories seriously? You have to be able to differentiate between fiction and reality——

However childish it may be, whom among them that had given in to reality could laugh at her earnest thesis—— could laugh at Yozora who had seriously wondered more and more each day why she had grow to be older than sixteen?

After Yozora's outcry had nearly caused her to spit up blood, there was a moment of silence——

"I have no idea of what kinda bullshit you're on about.....!"

A single male student stepped forward. He was utterly furious, so edgy that he looked like he was about to hit someone. Following his lead, several boys and girls closed in on Yozora and Sena.

To tell the truth, it wouldn't be strange if a fight broke out now. It

didn't seem to matter that Yozora and Sena were girls. To most of the people here now—— Yozora and Sena weren't seen as human: they were the 'evil enemy' that had to be defeated.

When I was about to step in to save them—— someone seized my jacket from behind to stop me. I didn't turn around.

".....Are you really sure?"

Rika asked quietly so only I could hear.

"I think I know what I'm doing, but..... ultimately, the black hair and glasses are just a mask."

To get the misunderstanding of being a delinquent out of the way, I had always put in my most earnest efforts.

I diligently attended classes and I studied and read in the library in the hope of convincing people. And of course I had never been violent at school.

Exactly because my delinquency was a misunderstanding, once I put on my black wig and glasses I was accepted by everyone in the academy, with classmates saying "He just happened to look like that and he's actually not a delinquent."

Rika wasn't asking if I was sure I wanted to render this one week with my disguise useless—— but if I was willing to throw away all my honest efforts since I had come to this academy.

Frankly, it felt regrettable to let go of what I finally managed achieve; the situation I had wished for so much. It was because I had come to know peace, I was scared to return to being hated. I didn't want to. It was hard.

So I used some magic to get rid of my hesitation.

20 / 23

I freed the words I had once sealed away.

I turned to Rika, bluffing a smile the best I could I turned to Rika and bluffed a smile the best I could to try and resist crying the most miserable tears in the world.

"Eh? What did you say?"

——A weapon that changed the flow of tales through brute power.

——A shield that, when you wished, blocked the world's forced justice.

For the neither strong, nor ungentle, diminutive me, the phrase 'what did you say' was like a sorcerous incantation to turn me into an 'Ore TUEEE'

protagonist from novels or manga.

Rika made little smile and let go of me, then she gave me a gentle push from behind.

I had a friend who would push me from behind. Rika would watch my back. That alone made me think I wouldn't be scared no matter who my enemy may be. So I.....

"URUAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!"

.....Raised a frightening, deep war cry produced from the depths of my abdomen.

Startled, the mob turned around to me.

"HYOEE?!" "H-Hasegawa-kun?!" "What's wrong, Hasegawa?!"
"Hasegawa?!"

The students who had ceased to be scared of me this week, called my name simultaneously.

I took my fake glasses off and threw them to the ground, then I tossed away the wig vigorously.

Farewell, black-haired, glasses-wearing honor student.

From now on, I'll be Hasegawa Kodaka the Delinquent.

"H-Hasegawa transformed?!" "He's blond (?) all of a sudden!" "He's a Super Yasai-jin?!"

"No, that's his real nature!" "He deceived us!" "The delinquent rumors were true?!"

The chattering students scattered before me like small, skittering spiders. fled from in front of me like small spiders.

""Kodaka?!""

21 / 23

Yozora and Sena exclaimed in unison.

I turned to where the two of them stood and dashed through the splitting crowd.

"TRYING TO LAY HANDS ON MY WOMEN——!! YOU'VE GOT SOME NERVE, HAAAAaaaaa——!!"

While screaming something outrageous, I soon reached the male student who was about to grab Yozora and slammed him in the face with all I had.

"HIGYAA—?!"

The strike blew the male student away. It wasn't the first time I had hit someone, but it had been a while. It was a feeling I couldn't come to like, no matter how much I did it.

But I had had no choice this time. To erase the impact of that intense badmouthing from Sena and Yozora from the hearts of the students and furthermore overwrite it with something even more intense—— I had no choice but to give them the most tangible glimpse of hell with the rampage of Badboy Hasegawa. If I didn't, Yozora and Sena would be hated throughout the school.

With this moment, the reputation of Hasegawa Kodaka as an out-of-control troublemaker would not be a misunderstanding or misinterpretation—— it would be reality.

There's no turning back; I never can go back. But I don't care!

Even if hundreds of people hate me, I'll be fine so long as I can protect those few dear to me!

"LET THE RAPE-FEST BEGIIIIIN!! EVERY SINGLE BITCH IN THIS ACADEMY

**WILL BECOME LORD HASEGAWA KODAKA'S SEX
SLAAAAAAAAAAVE!! GOT A PROBLEM? THEN COME GET
SOOOOOOOOOOME!!"**

To stir up the guys who were scared stiff from my pre-emptive punch, I yelled something even more ridiculous in desperation.

"KYAA—!" "NOOO—!" "H-HE'S NOT KIDDING!" "Y-YUUKO-CHAN, STEP BACK!" "I'LL

PROTECT YOU, YAMAZAKI-SAN!" "Atsushi-kun.....! Kyun—♥" "GO TO HELL, HASEGAWAAA!"

Several male students bared their fangs and rushed in to attack me all at once.

Sorry..... Every single one of you isn't just a side-character, everyone has a name, a personality, and their own life. You have friends, worry about your relationships, change, 22 / 23

chase dreams. Everyone's the protagonist of their own story, but—right now, you'll be the side-character of my story.

Howling like a beast, I abandoned all hesitation and brought mayhem upon them. I didn't have the leisure to worry about myself. The basic plan was to fight them for the shortest time possible and make them run off, but for now I ignored that and just raged with all I had. It was different from a group of no-good punks whose numbers were limited; everyone in this place was my enemy. It would be impossible to settle this quickly. Be that as it may, these kids attended a peaceful missionary school. They were no match for someone like me, who had been exposed to the most absurd violence since childhood!

"YOU WANNA BE FUCKED IN THE ASS, YOU FREEEEEEEEAKS?!"

While I was being beaten, kicked, and grabbed, I beat, kicked, and threw many of them down, until some midget blocked my way.

"Too bad, Hasegawa-kun..... maybe this is fate..... I will be the one—— to stop you!"

He looked me in the eye and spouted some way too cool-ish words. *Errr, who was this guy again——*

"——Ah."

It was Matsuyama-kun, the Judo Club member who had kept the score with me at the basketball match. By the time I remembered, he had already performed a judo shoulder throw and I was lying face up after being flipped onto my back with a fierce impact——

Translator notes and references

[1] She's speaking monotone, in case it wasn't clear.

[2] Says "Ladies and gentlemen" but Hinata ain't so bright.

[3] Basically means overpowered. Comes from "oretsueeeeeee" or "I'm so stroooooooooong"

with some kansai dialect.

Chapter 8: Be My Friend

I was to receive my official punishment from the staff another day.

A teacher told me that it'd come down to maybe a written apology as well as a week of suspension after Christmas holidays, and I was forbidden from participating in the ski training camp. On the occasion, I was also forbidden to go into school during the holidays.

After I had been thrown down by Matsuyama-kun, a heap of the guys had jumped on me and pinned me down. But before I was completely bludgeoned by them, Hinata-san had come running and brought the brawl to an end. After my wounds had been tended to in the infirmary, the teacher on duty scolded me in the staff room.

Without doubt, I had been the first to throw a punch and there were plenty of dead-sure witnesses who could testify that I screamed insane stuff about rape and turning everyone into sex slaves. In conclusion, I was to blame for everything.

Luckily no student seemed to have been severely wounded in the brawl. In fact, I was the most seriously injured. Well that should be expected when it's one-against-many.

When questioned why I did it, I kept saying, "because I was irritated." I didn't want to get Yozora or Sena involved.

Plus, I heard that Hinata-san had settled the matter with the students and the Christmas party had started up again. It was an event we had worked hard to prepare for, so I was really glad that it hadn't amounted to nothing.

☺

After receiving a scolding and *a certain paper*, I left the staff room and headed to the Neighbors Club room.

The teacher had told me to head straight home without any detours, but I hoped he would overlook that I had to make a stop to settle some unfinished business.

The Mass was already over and everyone else was at the Christmas

party. I walked around the pitch-black premises with not a soul in sight. I could faintly hear lively singing and music coming from the gym.

I entered the chapel through the backdoor and headed for lounge 4.

Light was coming from the room.

When I took a peek, I saw Mikadzuki Yozora and Kashiwazaki Sena inside.

".....By the way, Yozora. I'm giving this to you."

Said Sena, presenting the small ribboned package to Yozora.

It was the same gift that the girls at the party had dropped on the floor and the reason Sena had become infuriated.

So it hadn't been for Kobato, but for Yozora..... that was unexpected.

Yozora was also surprised.

".....I've no reason to accept anything from you. You planning to turn into Santa Claus, too?"

"I'm not!"

Sena blushed a little.

".....It's not a Christmas present, it's a *birthday present*. Today's your birthday, isn't it?"

".....!"

Yozora's eyes widened in surprise. I was surprised, too. I had no idea.

"Why do you know my birthday?"

"I'm the chairman's daughter. When I want to know something like a birth date, it's as good as done."

".....I see," said Yozora with a small and awkward-ish voice. She was blushing a little.

".....I-I guess it's fine if it's a birthday present."

"Why are you acting so self-important....."

Yozora accepted the package from Sena.

".....It should be fine, I think. But it got dropped, so I'm sorry if it broke."

".....Then I'll open it right now."

Yozora gently opened the package.

Inside was a hair clip in the shape of a crescent moon.

".....H-How is it?"

".....Well, not bad," said Yozora sullenly.

With her face still flushed she continued, whispering:

".....Thanks."

"Ehehe," giggled Sena, embarrassed. "Now that we've come this far, how about I put it on 2 / 5

you?"

".....We've come this far, so I'll let you do it."

"Again, why are you acting so self-important?"

Complaining, Sena took the hairclip from Yozora and put it into Yozora's hair.

Even from a distance, I could tell that the hairclip suited Yozora really well.

"Hm, it really suits you. As expected of me."

Sena smiled satisfied, and Yozora went all bashful, "Th-That so?"

".....To tell you the truth, I've always been envious of people who were born on Christmas."

"You're weird. If it's Christmas and your birthday, you only get celebrated once and only get one present; there are lots of cliché jokes on that."

"That doesn't sound so great..... But..... isn't it kind of cool to

have your birthday on this special day? It feels like you're something special."

"Hmph....." Yozora gushed and then started to speak with a distant look in her eyes.

"There was a time when I thought the same. Being born on the same day as Christ, I believed there was no mistaking that I had some kind of noteworthy destiny, something pitiful like that. However, Christmas isn't actually the day Christ was born."

"Ah, I know that. It's just a 'Commemoration Day' for Christ's birth, and not His real birthday. There are many theories like it having been utilized for missionary purposes when it was originally a national holiday of another religion, but the only sure thing is that it's not His actual birthday."

".....Exactly."

Yozora nodded seemingly a bit frustrated.

"I had always been under the impression that Christmas was the day Christ had been born, and it wasn't until my first year in elementary school that I discovered the truth. Back then it made me realize that I wasn't some special human being chosen for something great, after all....."

"Ahaha— Stuuupid, stuuupid."

For what had been a relatively serious story about Yozora's roots, Sena still scoffed and laughed at her relentlessly.

"Ku—..... I knew I shouldn't have told you something so serious.....!" groaned Yozora, sulking.

Sena suddenly looked at Yozora with a serious expression.

"No need to worry, you *are* special..... I will make you special."

"What?"

Yozora seemed puzzled.

".....Hey, Yozora."

".....What now?"

Sena took a deep breath and — showing nervousness similar to that of somebody about to deliver a once-in-a-lifetime confession — asked:

"Will you be my friend?"

Yozora pretended not to have heard.

"Eh, what did you say?"

I almost keeled over there and then. I wanted to pat myself on the shoulder for not making any noise.

"W-Wait! Don't say something Kodaka would!" protested Sena, her face turning red.

"What absurdities are you yammering about, Meat?"

Yozora smiled softly, her expression void of any antagonizing spirit.

"Because..... aren't we already friends?"

It was like the exchange Rika and I had on the rooftop after our fight. In fact, it wasn't like it: it was exactly the same. *Which reminds me, hadn't Yozora seen us back then.....?*

Even if she was plagiarizing or copying or just blindly following, it's fine, I thought.

Because that's who Mikadzuki Yozora was.

The copy of a hero of justice, the copy of a magical girl, the copy of a man, the copy of Kashiwazaki Sena, the copy of Hidaka Hinata, the copy of Hasegawa Kodaka, the copy of Shiguma Rika——

Mikadzuki Yozora was repeating moves to become someone cool. She continued to struggle to get closer to her ideal, and after watching her totally ridiculous, uncool and unlucky self, that was what made her cooler than anybody.

Yozora and Sena shared carefree smiles.

They had started insulting each other the moment they met and

clashed whenever they could. These two, from an outsider's perspective, were the embodiment of the saying

'teasing is a sign of affection,' and suddenly they had mutually recognized each other as friends. Nothing that made me happier. My heart was touched by a scene that was truly befitting of a Christmas miracle.

"....."

I gently closed the door so that the pair wouldn't notice me.

It'd feel awkward to rain on this beautiful scene.

Can't be helped then..... I'll show them next year..... when my suspension is over.

Clutching my club resignation form, I quietly walked away from the clubroom.

Translator notes and references

Note: Yozora's birthday is apparently Christmas Eve/24th December, and this is treated here as the same day as Christ's for some reason, which is of course celebrated on the 25th for most Christians. It seems a bit weird, but they seem to celebrate Eve more so there anyway, in their own special ways, so I guess that still makes it special birth date.

Chapter 9: FANTASISTA

I met Yukimura at the entrance to the church.

'Aniki, are you going home?'

'Uh, ye- yeah...'

As a result of Yukimura and Akane-senpai being in charge of the behind the scenes work, this was the first time we had met since the party.

When Yukimura was making preparations for the party, she was wearing the sportswear assigned by the school, but now she was wearing a pink dress, with light makeup applied to her face and her lips painted with lipstick. She seemed more mature than usual, making me anxious.

'Yu- Yukimura, you changed your clothes! I didn't know you had clothes like this.'

I said while looking as if I was trying not to look directly at her body.

'I bought them a few days ago together with Yusa-yusa. Because, as far as girls are concerned, Christmas is the day when the winner is decided.'

'Is- is that so...'

Deciding the winner of what...? I decided not to comment.

'...um... it really suits you... it suits you extremely well, really.'

'Thank you, Aniki.'

Yukimura gave a faint smile, managing to completely conform to the 'delicate and touching beautiful girl' ideal. [\[1\]](#)

But at the same, she was saying without hesitation that she was a woman, as if she had completely forgotten having said she wanted to become a true man, instead forging straight ahead towards "increasing her girl power"... although saying this is strange, but seeing Yukimura like this made her seem very decisive... it was very

manly. It was like when Sanada Yukimura charged the basecamp of Tokugawa during the summer siege of Osaka castle. [2]

'Aniki was also very impressive just now.'

It seemed that Yukimura had seen the disturbance earlier as well. Remembering it once again made my cheeks burn hotly.

'...I acted really recklessly. My whole body hurts. I look really bad, don't I?'

'Wounds are the decorations of a man. Seeing Aniki with black hair moved people's hearts too, but as expected Aniki's current top-to-bottom yankee looks are also fine.'

This jerk seriously always wants to put me in a good light, she really can't be swayed... this is making me subconsciously feel like having her spoil me.

At that point, Yukimura keenly spotted the paper held in my hand.

'Aniki, may I ask what that is?'

'Uuh, this is..... it's a..... club resignation form.'

Despite hesitating a bit, I answered honestly.

...I had always been thinking about this one thing.

Regarding the void in the Neighbor's club, was the existence of Hasegawa Kodaka, this 'man', just an obstacle... was he the main culprit that led the Neighbor's club to become disharmonious?

What was even more annoying was that this existence, when he was being an obstruction, still managed to be the key to the relationships of the club members.

Headed by the club founder Yozora, everyone except Sena had all joined the club because of me. When I fled from the club earlier, the only people who kept it running were Sena and Yukimura.

Allowing people who had been pushed aside to return to their original selves, it was just like a paradise□ in regards to what I see as the ideal Neighbor's club, the greatest obstacle is not other people, it is me.

Yet just as I left the Neighbor's club, I at the same time also

represented the collapse of the Neighbor's club.

This is the way it's been up until now.

Seeing Yozora defend Sena at the gymnasium, I was convinced that the club was already fine. The central figure of the Neighbor's club had become Mikazuki Yozora, and not me.

Kobato and Maria both like Yozora. Yukimura also seems to have a newfound respect for Yozora. Rika originally had a favorable impression of Yozora, so if it's the Yozora as of now, she should also be able to establish a good relationship with her.

If only I disappear after this, all will be well. The Neighbor's club (of my ideals) will, with my resignation, become complete.

'Do you want to resign from the Neighbor's club?'

'...Yeah.'

Not particularly shaken, I nodded in response to the idly inquiring Yukimura.

'...just now, Sena and Yozora recognized each other as friends. From now on, as long as I am gone, there won't be any unnecessary disputes in the Neighbor's club.'

'...what does 'unnecessary disputes' refer to?'

Yukimura directly locked eyes with me.

'Um... it is, well... between boys and girls... romantic relationships... that is, love.'

'Is Aniki saying that love is an unnecessary thing?'

'...Yeah. The Neighbor's club is an organization for making friends. If there are just girls there, then there shouldn't be any boys. Things such as love... will hinder friendship.'

I said anxiously. Seeing Yozora brightening up in these past two weeks made me come to realize that, as long as love didn't tear apart relationships, she was clever and skillful, fully capable of taking care of others, and would be seen by her friends as an amazing club leader.

'Aniki... thinks that friendship is greater than love?'

'Right!'

Yukimura's voice when asking this question was somewhat cold, whereas I determinedly made my assertion.

'It was only after I made friends that I understood it, that friendship really is great. Even just eating together which friends makes me so happy I could die, even just strolling down the streets together makes me extremely happy. Chatting all the time without tiring of it, being able to say anything without feeling bored. It makes you feel like you'll be together forever. As long as I have friends, I feel like I can accomplish anything. Limitless bravery comes rushing forth. As long as I have them by my side, I wouldn't mind having the entire world be my foe!'

'The 'friendship' that you speak of, does it refer to Rika-dono?'

'Yeah!'

BAM!

'Ooow!?'

As I nodded vigorously, Yukimura suddenly headbutted me in the chin. It was super-painful.

'Yu-yukimura, what are you doing!?'

Yukimura's face was expressionless, as she spoke coldly to the teary-eyed me:

'You idiot.'

'What!? Wh-why am I an idiot...?'

'Aniki's feelings towards Rika-dono are absolutely not those of friendship.'

'Huh...?'

I furrowed my brow, unsure of what Yukimura meant-

'It's love.'

.....

'....Eh.... what was that....?'

I was so dumbstruck that I said this unconsciously.

'It's love.'

Yukimura repeated herself, as if to show that I couldn't play dumb.

'...because I'm the same as Aniki.'

She added this sentence as well, her cheeks blushing slightly.

I was visibly rattled. My heart beat violently.

But my mind was unbelievably blank. Up until this point, at the times when I had spoken to Rika I had often sensed a different kind of feeling. Yukimura's words still completely wiped this blankness away.

Is that so.... as it turns out, I've been in love with Rika.

At that point, Rika's words reappeared in my mind.

'Be Rika's friend forever.'

Back then, I didn't understand why Rika would say such an obvious thing.

But here was the reason: because it wasn't an obvious thing at all.

Rika had probably realized it... no, she had realized it, hadn't she.

The feelings I had for Rika wasn't just those of friendship.

So Rika could just constantly stress that we were 'friends'.

So, the meaning of Rika's actions were-

'... I... broke up with her...?'

I instantly lost my strength, and stumbled into the wall.

'Let's just be friends' are words often used to reject other people's confessions, but it's different from that sort of common feeling. I know that as far as Rika is concerned, a 'friend' is an incredibly important existence, so perhaps I needn't be so dejected.

But the reality was that my good intentions were refused by Rika. This fact came as a shock for me, as if my head had been struck.

'Haha... damn it all...'

I shuddered involuntarily, an empty smile appearing on my face.

In my mind images of the aftermath of mine and Rikas fight on the rooftop appeared.

After me and Rika had discussed what to do, she asked me what I thought about Sena, and I answered 'I love Sena', and then I had said that I probably liked Yukimura, but that my feelings towards Yozora were 'heavy'... it was that exchange.

'...Aside from Sena-senpai, what do you think of the others? Especially Yukimura-kun and Yozora-senpai.'

Back then, Rika left a fatal loophole. At the time, I was too careless and overlooked it.

Besides from Sena, aside from Yukimura and Yozora, there was clearly only one import person left in front of my eyes.

Rika is my friend. Existing between us is 'friendship'.

At least, that's what I thought that Rika felt towards me back then.

However... I've never clearly said 'how I feel about about Rika'.

...I really am a big idiot.

Her looks should be her best point. When should be happy when we are together, she should both be able to chat energetically, she should be hard-working and considerate of friends, she should be more gentle than others as well as being someone who is easily embarrassed, if I'm in trouble I can't get out of she should always have the courage to help me out even if she'll be hated by the other side- a person like this, this kind of amazing girl, did I really think I wouldn't fall in love with her? Did I really think that as I got along well with her, there would not be even a shred of romantic feelings?

'But senpai, between men and women there can never be a normal friendship.'

Rika said this to Yozora back when she had just entered the Neighbor's club. She herself mustn't have been able to imagine just what weight these words would have.

Now, those words we're just like a gigantic meteorite, crushing down on my heart.

It was as if my heart was being strung up with chains, making it difficult to breath.

This... is very painful. It hurts a lot.

'I will be patient, so please be patient as well!'

To think I had been able to say such cruel words to Sena.

Clearly at the time I simply had no way of knowing what the taste the anguish of patience was like.

Did I actually choose the path of forcing this anguish on others, instead of just on myself?

I was carrying so many grave sins that it made me stunned.

'Do you understand, Aniki?'

Yukimura asked me calmly as though she was punishing me, whose head was powerlessly hanging down.

'Yeah... I understand.'

I stared blankly, the me who had thought himself an infallible protagonist, yet whose social experience was so low.

I truly was too ignorant.

That this kind of me wanted to become a teacher and save other, guide others, was really just too laughable.

'Just now, I said I was the same as Aniki. My feelings have always, always been the same as Aniki's.'

...The same as me? Yukimura's feelings had always been the same as the feelings that I'd had towards Rika-

'Yukimura, what are you-'

I was just going to ask Yukimura to clarify just what she meant by this-

WHAM!

Yukimura used both her hands to press against the wall, trapping me between them, and then covering my lips with her lips.

This kind of kiss did by no means fit the 'chuu~' sound effect. If you had to use a sound effect to portray it, it would probably be 'CHUUUU-CHU!'. It was that kind of overflowing masculine and heroic kiss.

By the way, as far as the me who had never been in a relationship was concerned, it naturally was my first kiss.

My thoughts stopped. My mind went blank. But still, the warm, soft sensation coming from my lips lefty me feeling very comfortable. It was almost as if I was becoming addicted to the pleasure of this first experience.

My lips were ravaged by Yukimura for almost 10 seconds.

After her lips parted from mine, I remained standing in place as though I was drunk.

Yukimura's face reddened, her breath sensually spilling from her mouth, staring at me intently with eyes moist from glistening tears.

'I like you. Please go out with me.'

In the time that the other Neighbor's club members had been gradually changing, there was only one girl who never wavered, who wholeheartedly pursued her own love (heading straight for the general's head), who now launched an attack guaranteed to kill.

Like the nimbleness of a samurai's slash, full of manliness but at the same time also clearly giving off the flavor of a pitiful girl, this manner of straight-to-the-point [3] confession was truly Kusunoki Yukimura's style. I couldn't help but answering her in a mesmerized state:

'Eh? Uh, okay.'

(The end of volume 10)

Translation by Black Hand Scans

The word used here is difficult for me to translate in a way that does the meaning of the expression justice, further complicated by

the fact that the original translator used a chinese idiom. My guess is that the original japanese was something like かわいそう (kawaisō) which can be 'poor; pitiable; pathetic; pitiful'. Or, to use the modern vernacular, 'moe'.

Sanada Yukimura was a warlord of the Sengoku era of Japan, who served the daimyos of the Uesugi, Hojo, Tokugawa and Toyotomi. I can't help but feel there might be a subtle message in Kodaka's comparison here however, as Sanada Yukimura died charging Tokugawa's forces during the siege...

The original line used for this an idiom with the more colorful literal translation of "opening the doors to see the mountains".

Download all your Fav Light Novels from [Just Light Novels](#)